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SONGS AND BALLADS OF THE ANTHRACITE MINER

SONGS AND BALLADS OF THE ANTHRACITE MINER

A SEAM OF FOLKLORE WHICH ONCE RAN THROUGH LIFE IN THE HARD COAL FIELDS OF PENNSYLVANIA

GATHERED AND EDITED BY

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By George G. Korson

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TO

MY WIFE

109659

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.

—GRAY.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS is a collection of folklore developed among the miners of the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania during the last century. It represents an attempt to salvage from the past a vein rich in the homespun creations of the common people before it is lost forever with the passing of that generation which produced it.

Hidden from the world by their mountains, these diggers of coal dragged out their years in Biblical simplicity. Night clothed their existence while dawn seemed to lie around the corner, and yet was so painfully out of reach. Danger lurked in the mine at every turn, ready to pounce upon them like some beast of prey.

To make articulate the sadness felt by the folk, to express for it its sorrows, its simple joys, and the humor which somehow danced its way through the mist like a sunbeam, a group of bards, miners themselves, appeared on the horizon. Their homespun ballads spread in the characteristic way of folklore, and often were carried from place to place by itinerant miners, who, deserting their underground chambers, strolled through the valleys with a song on their lips, while they played a fiddle or strummed a banjo.

These songs and ballads, illumined with legends

and historical notes, not only mirror the mine and the life that went on around it, but provide an insight into the souls of the men whose hardihood and near-serfdom brought warmth to the country's fireside and fuel to its industry. And this is the vein which was sinking deeper into oblivion when I stumbled upon it.

The period when balladry and minstrelsy flourished in the region opened somewhere around the Civil War time and gradually "spooned out" with changing conditions after the decisive strike of 1902. The miners were mostly Irish, Welsh, English and Scottish, and the form of the ballads in the present collection were apparently influenced by those which they had sung back home.

For the past quarter of a century sons of English-speaking miners have been turning from mining to other work for a livelihood. Their places have been taken by peasants from southern Europe who have proved equal to the wracking labor. Of these, members of the Slavic race far outnumber all others. The fact that they are represented in this collection by only one ballad may indicate that they have been barren. Yet it must be recognized that the Slavs are still creating a chapter in the story of anthracite, peculiarly their own, but paralleling the experiences of their Anglo-Saxon predecessors, allowing for the changes time has wrought in the industry. In justice to them, therefore, there is a probability that there exists a group of mining songs buried in the native idiom.

This book, like a tuft of grass poking its head through a bed of coal silt, makes known in its own modest way, that whatever the surface may have appeared in the past, life was not all dead below it.

The ballads in Section I show the miner loyal to his old village in spite of all the bitter memories that its name brought back to him. "Number Six," Carbon County, inspired one of its former inhabitants to sing—

When she's down and the rock banks scatter
O'er the beds of her noisy geese,
On a granite slab in gold letters:
"May the old town rest in peace."

Bear Ridge in the Schuylkill Valley which all but crumbled some sixty years ago after its mine was abandoned, one day moved a bard to introspection—

It makes me sad and lonely now
When I think of years gone by,
That I spent at the old breaker
When I was but a boy.
My youthful days are past and gone—
Old age is coming fast,
The only thing that is left to me
Is a picture of the past.

In Section V, we see the mine worker as a God-fearing man, looking to heaven when death stalks through the mine. But in time of strike he set his faith in his union as the ballads which make up Section VI indicate. Take for example:

Here's to the Knights of Labor,
That brave and gallant band,
That Corbon and old Swigard,
Is trying to disband,
But stick and hang brave union men;
We'll make them rue the day
They thought to break the K. of L.
In free America.

With starvation at his door, the digger of coal still found courage to tell the world:

Our wages shall not be reduced, tho' poverty do reign.
We'll have '74 basis, boys, before we'll work again.

But alas! his union was not always able to sustain him in his struggles and he went back to his mine chamber after a strike a humiliated, starving man. How best was he to ease his aching heart, or assuage his seared soul? These homespun songs and ballads provided an escape from his troubles and served as a medium of expressing his sorrows.

The workers and their families lived in remote villages or patches, as they called them, which either hugged the mountainsides far from the main roads; or lay down in the valleys where miles of rugged landscape often intervened between them. They went down the murky depths of the mine for pay that brought them only the bare necessities of life. In many parts of the region they were not trusted with money. If anything was left after the coal operator got through checking off for rent, store bills, and mine

supplies, the miner received scrip. And these scraps of paper were redeemable in the company-owned store where he was forced to buy his needs on pain of losing his job. The company store evil was finally removed from the anthracite coal fields by an act of the State Legislature.

Some years after the Civil War, the mine workers agreed to a scheme known in industrial history as the sliding scale. Their rates of pay were to be governed by the rise and fall of average prices at a given port—the whim of the market instead of the operator was to be the determining factor in their earnings. Before it was in use very long the workers became dizzy keeping track of their percentages and found the scale sliding away from them. They had pinned their hopes on a mirage! The horizon became darker and darker.

Because of its isolation, the patch was a world in itself. It was common for immigrants of one country or from the same county to form colonies; and there has survived to this day in local names such as "Irishtown" and "Welsh Hill" evidence of this tendency. It is a natural thing for people in a new country faced with strange, perhaps hostile surroundings to do this.

Judged by modern standards, the homes in which the miners lived during the '70s and '80s (some are still being occupied) were simply hovels. A common type consisted of only two rooms, one above the other, with no cellar. The room on the ground

floor was used during the day; the one above it, with its low-hanging ceiling, served as a bed chamber. The whole family was herded into it. There was no pretence at plaster, the rough-board walls haunting the denizens. In the winter sleepers buried themselves under thick quilts made of goose-feathers—snow sometimes came through the roof. In the summer, on the other hand, the cottages were baked more thoroughly than the humble dwellers desired for their comfort. The people grew a number of vegetables in their yards, the potato being the chief staple. Almost everybody kept some fowl—chickens, geese, ducks. The more thrifty were able to buy a pig or two and perhaps, a cow. Several days a year were set apart for slaughtering when diggers of coal laid aside drill and pick to wield a knife. Many developed skill in this work and were hired to do their neighbors' pigs and fowl. They were the pioneer butchers in the anthracite coal fields. The meat was salted away in barrels or boxes and buried in a hole in the ground; this was done usually in the fall for a winter's eating; sometimes a shanty built close to the house was used for this purpose.

The mine worker lived on a starvation basis and in a state of suspense, especially during the years that followed the loss of a big strike when his union lay prostrate as a result of it. Then he was thrown on the mercy of those who employed him.

> . . . We do not dare
> To look a boss in the face and whisper "bah";

Unless we wish to join the mighty train
Of miners wandering o'er the earth like Cain.[1]

Discontentment was widespread, and one of its results was the flaring up of a band of terrorists who called themselves the "Mollie Maguires." The Mollies robbed, burned and murdered, and mine operators and their foremen became the chief targets of their consuming wrath. It was not until the middle '70s that they were subdued and the semblance of peace began to reappear in the region; many of their leaders were hanged and others sent to prison.

Long periods of idleness left the mine worker with a lot of time on his hands. His isolation caused him to fall back on his native resources for recreation. Shindigs, jig dancing contests, parties and cards filled in the time and it was sometimes at these gatherings that the native ballads were sung or improvised. There were three days in the year when the holiday mood was at its quintessence—namely, Hallowe'en, New Year's Day and St. Patrick's Day. Once or twice a year when the Dublin Dan show or a circus came to one of the larger towns, the event drew him out of his burrow-like world.

Many of the songs and ballads in this collection emerged from one or another of several settings. The most popular in the summer was the village green. This was located either in the middle of a village or on its outskirts, usually the latter.

[1] See "Old W. B. A. Days," by Joseph F. Patterson, Volume 2, December 30, 1908, Proceedings Schuylkill County Historical Society.

The tavern or barroom drew the coal diggers in bad weather, and in the winter. It was in every sense a social center and before an unsavory reputation came to be associated with it, even the womenfolk gathered there to join the men at shindigs, at raffles and perhaps at a jug of ale. It was often no more elaborate an affair than a miner's cottage having an improvised bar and a number of crude, wooden benches and tables for the customers. The men played cards or dominoes for drinks, and over their jugs they talked shop and exchanged bawdy stories or reminiscenses of the mine. But what interests us most is that they sang their ballads here, frequently improvising them.

Still another gathering point was a section of a mine where men and boys came to while away the dinner hour. All that they could see of one another as they squatted or lay sprawled out, were eyes and teeth gleaming in the weird, eery light made by tiny yellow flames which sputtered from their head lamps. They sang ballads or listened to their minstrels sing them as mine rats nibbled in their dinner pails.

Under these conditions there developed that order of minstrels already referred to, which paralleled in picturesqueness those who wandered over England centuries ago. With scarcely anything more than the three r's (and sometimes not even that) as the sum of their cultural equipment, and lacking even the rudiments of a musical education, they strolled through the coal fields strumming a banjo or fiddling

a tune, in accompaniment to ballads which they sang or made up as they went. There was no professional feeling in what they did. They liked ballad singing and reciting, jig dancing and fiddling better than drilling a hole in the face of a coal seam, and followed their bent. Their ultimate reward of course, would be in a miners' heaven, but here on earth they were satisfied with a bite to eat, something with which to slake one's thirst, and a bed to rest on for tomorrow's journey. Only two of these minstrels, to my information, "Giant" O'Neill and Harry Tempest, both of Shenandoah, Schuylkill County, developed into professional performers outside the coal region. But even they came back to their old haunts when they had tired of the stage.

Ed Foley of Mount Carmel, Northumberland County, was probably the most typical of them. Railroad trains were an abomination to him and he avoided them whenever he could elude his friends. He much preferred to stroll from village to village, stopping off in each for a few hours during which he played his fiddle, sang ballads or made up pieces for the diversion of his hosts who seldom failed to shower him with their simple gifts. Pat Johnson of Eagle Hill in the Schuylkill Valley—he the mine blacksmith turned tea peddler—never went abroad without his fiddle tucked securely under his arm. John Curtis, blind miner of Morea, Schuylkill County, roamed over the region reciting a ballad about himself which told

. . . of that fatal day
That I was stricken blind.

But romance no longer colors the anthracite coal mining industry. And in its flight it has taken balladry and minstrelsy with it. Mechanical inventions in mine and home, though improving the physical lot of the miner have, on the other hand, been the very influences which have brought about the decay of those two ancient institutions that were of such spiritual comfort to him in the last century.

No more does the miner sing at his work as he used to in the days when he turned his auger-like drill into the face of a coal seam, for the staccato wail of the percussion drill would drown out his voice. In the old days, he worked in water-level operations generally and used only a few simple tools, while to-day he is shot down a shaft 1,000 to 2,000 feet deep and is called upon to handle difficult machines driven either by compressed air or electricity. The small, independent operations of another day have been developed and merged into a few gigantic corporations in which men who once took pride working with their hands have become little more than automatons.

Isolated village life, once a distinguishing feature in this region, is fast disappearing as the automobile drags the village toward the main highways and the radio lays the civilized world at the miner's door-step. Does he seek solace in a ballad when his heart becomes sad? Hardly. He goes to the movies or to a vaudeville show to lose himself. One who works as

hard as he does and risks his life every time he goes down the shaft deserves to enjoy the material comforts of a mechanical civilization. His lot in life has been made much happier by his union, the United Mine Workers of America, whose influence in his behalf has been exerted powerfully ever since the great strike of 1902. Indeed, it has lifted him from near-serfdom to a plane of self-respect and independence, and the whole region has prospered as a result. But there is one regrettable thing about his reaction to the new order, from the viewpoint of the folklorist. Instead of using his native resources to provide his own recreation as he once did, he has come to rely upon outside influences which give him, from their mechanical nature, a sort of synthetic satisfaction. His new condition has made him a stranger to his deep, inner self. Not only has the miner of to-day almost forgotten his own songs and ballads, but a note of apology is discernible in the manner with which he sometimes recalls them for the stranger, as if he were just a little ashamed to have been once so naive. Prosperity always has had a sterile effect on folklore.

There are several pieces in this collection that cannot be claimed as folklore. They may be recognized by their artificial ring and I have indicated their sources in the text to preclude the reader being misled. A number of others are not indigenous to the anthracite coal region though they were once sung there. However, the subject matter in all of them is the miner's life. They recommend themselves to our

patience by their antiquity (if I may be pardoned the use of the term to cover such a short span of years); by a picture of a past phase of the anthracite coal industry which they project; or by a forgotten period of local history which they conjure up.

The songs and ballads which sprang from the soil of the anthracite coal region have in them the crude strength, the naturalness and the freshness of things that grow out of the earth. The bards sometimes borrowed their melodies from current hits. But their lyrics were original. True, they mixed meters; forced accents for the sake of a rhyme; rhymed vowels with disregard to the sound of consonants, and probably committed other sins against the rules of prosody. But the point is that they succeeded in expressing their innermost thoughts; their welled up feelings, and in leaving behind them something of the atmosphere, the color, the stark environment of the life which prevailed in these anthracite coal fields during the last century. Their stuff was folklore and whether or not it was poetry is entirely beside the point. Is poetry essential to the folk ballad? Professor G. L. Kittredge, speaking of English and Scottish ballads, answers the question in this way: "There is no occasion to make comparisons as to excellence between these pieces and the poetry of art. Such comparisons are misleading; they tend only to confound the distinctions between two different categories of literature." [2]

[2] See "English and Scottish Popular Ballads," edited by Helen Child Sargent and George Lyman Kittredge.

The dominant note struck in these miners' ballads as in those of Irish and British origin which they recall, is that of objectivity. A ballad, stated in general terms, is a narrative in verse form. The bard shared with his audience a community of feeling, thoughts and facts, and when he gave expression to them, he was simply the voice of the group. His creation, inspired by the group, became its property, undergoing changes wherever it went, while the bard remained as obscure as before. Take, for instance, the case of Felix O'Hare. His piece, "The Shoo Fly" enjoyed a vogue in many parts of the anthracite region, its plaintive melody echoing even to Philadelphia music halls, yet his name was hardly known beyond the borders of the Schuylkill Valley where he lived.

The fact that they are known to have been the creations of individuals, does not lessen their value as folk songs or ballads. Scholars are agreed that somewhere in the background of every folk song, no matter what its age, stands a single author. Mencken makes this point clear. "Folk Songs" he says, "are written, like all other songs, by individuals. All the folk have to do with them is to choose the ones that are to survive. Sometimes, true enough, repetition introduces changes in them but those changes are not important. The basic song belongs to one bard, and to him alone." [3]

I was fortunate enough to be able to trace some

[3] See "Hiring a Hall," by H. L. Mencken, The New York World, Sunday, November 15, 1925.

of the forgotten miner-bards only because I began my research before the older generation had entirely passed from the scene. Had I delayed it by as few as five years, even this meagre collection might not have been what it is. The songs, ballads, and legendary lore came largely from men and women older than fifty and some past seventy.

Most of my research was done during the spring and summer of 1925. But some years previous I had interested myself in the life of the anthracite coal miner and had found many opportunities for studying it while serving as a reporter for the Wilkes-Barre "Record." But the most intensive and profitable experience came during 1924 when, as a member of the Pottsville "Republican" staff, I was charged with developing the Schuylkill Valley for news purposes. The Valley, as primitive a stretch of landscape as may be found in the region, lies between Tamaqua and Port Carbon, Schuylkill County.

Before long I managed to make myself a part of its communal life. I danced at old fashioned weddings and drank and ate along with the invited guests. I was up all hours of the night at wakes. I attended funerals. Home and church affairs drew me often.

I broke bread with miners in their homes. At times I saw them leave for the shaft. Some never came back alive. In my years of experience as a newspaperman, I had seen so many of these industrial soldiers brought home mangled or killed—seen them

as shrouded figures stretched under the candelabrum with life having been squeezed from them underground, that the sights I saw in the Schuylkill Valley were far from new to me. Coroner's inquests were held frequently during my sojourn there, and I hardly missed one, not only from a sense of duty to my paper, but because they revealed much in facts about mining, human nature, and the miner's viewpoint which I wanted to learn.

And as the months passed, I thought often about my observations, reactions and experiences. One evening in May, 1924, as I was sauntering down Centre Street in Pottsville, the thought flashed through my mind that I had not heard a song about the miner's life; the music that filled the air in the Schuylkill Valley was largely of the canned variety originating in Tin Pan Alley.

Assuming that such songs existed and that they had been collected, I asked Miss Edith Patterson, librarian of the Pottsville Public Library, for a copy of the desired book. She was as surprised at my request as I was disappointed in her reply. For there was no collection. Inquiries which I later made at the Wilkes-Barre, Scranton and Carbondale public libraries, and among old miners, confirmed this. Less than a year after, when other literary work which I had been doing was out of the way, I became seriously interested again in the miner's songs; and egged on by Miss Patterson, began gathering them for a magazine article. I met with so generous a

response and my enthusiasm mounted to such heights as a result, that I simply had to continue beyond my original intention. And somewhere along the middle of June, I decided not to end my research until I had visited all parts of the region and gathered sufficient material for a book. The work was arduous, fatiguing, even heart-breaking at times, yet these things could not make me give up. That spring and summer I lived in a world of fancy peopled with miners, ballads and legends.

I had no set plan before me, but followed leads to various parts of the region, from Carbondale in the northern field to Pottsville in the southern. In pursuit of ballads, I made two special trips each to Philadelphia and Atlantic City, and one to Wilmington, Del. Every one of the indigenous ballads I obtained from original sources—either from their authors, or from the men and women who once had sung them. Most of this material comes from Schuylkill, Luzerne, Carbon and Northumberland Counties, though other counties are represented. I also wanted to find out whether the boatmen on the canals which once carried the coal to tidewater had had any ballads of their own. So I visited Honesdale in Wayne County, which was at the head of the old Delaware and Hudson canal; Mauch Chunk from where the Lehigh canal led to Philadelphia; and interviewed an elderly captain who used to ply a barge on the Schuylkill canal which had run from Port Carbon to Philadelphia. The old-timers with whom I talked

could not recollect the canal men making up pieces about their trade. I was told that these fresh water sailors liked to regard themselves as real seamen, and to further the illusion occasionally sang salt water chanties which they had picked up on their journeys to New York and Philadelphia.

I have divided this collection into seven sections, the songs and ballads lending themselves readily to such an arrangement. Every piece is introduced with notes, historical or legendary, or both, which bear either on the ballad itself or on the subject it celebrates.

GEORGE G. KORSON

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

IT is obvious that without the help and cooperation of a large number of persons this collection could not have been gathered. Scattered over the anthracite coal region and in several Eastern cities are many—probably several hundred—who have earned my lasting gratitude for their generous aid. They have racked their memory for lines and stanzas that refused to be coaxed or wheedled out until after hours of effort. They have run their legs off in pursuit of a ballad which had eluded my best efforts. Old miners have sat hours scrawling out a piece they did not recall when I visited them. These people have done numerous other favors and only a generous

heart and a desire to see the precious old songs and ballads preserved could have prompted them to put themselves to all this trouble.

Nor do I forget the services of those who gave me leads which drove me bounding over hill and racing down valley, my anticipation running high, only to meet failure and disappointment at the end of the road. They were sincere or I would have known it before setting out on these fruitless trips. But memory played many of them strange tricks and they cannot be held responsible for this. Nor can they be blamed if the old-time singer had been killed by a fall of rock or had died from miner's asthma in an interval of twenty or thirty years.

My biggest debt of gratitude is due Miss Edith Patterson, librarian of the Pottsville Free Public Library. She supplied my first important lead and closely followed my quest, helping with suggestions and practical assistance. Much of my historical research was done in the Pottsville library which has an unusually fine collection of data on the anthracite coal mining industry. Miss Katherine Tappert, librarian of the Morristown, N. J. library rendered courteous service, as did the staff of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Mr. Kyran Donahue of Pottsville, former district mine inspector, provided me with many fruitful leads. Mr. B. I. Curran, aged school teacher of Centralia, Columbia County, collected three touching ballads in his section, which came to me at the start of my

research when a ballad was worth to me far more than its weight in gold. Joseph Gallagher, Patrick J. "Giant" O'Neill, Harry Tempest and John Hory, survivors of that picturesque order of miner-bards and minstrels who regaled their fellows in the '70s, '80s and '90s sang or recited their ballads for me. The little giant threw in a jig for good measure—and it was as a jig dancer that he had won his nickname, you know. John A. Murphy, another bard, sent me his ballad, "The Driver Boy," which was popular in its day.

Louis and Zelda Popkin of New York; Benjamin I. Sperling, Esq., my life-long friend; Dorothy Vedder Wegg, the painter, Bellamy Partridge, editor of Brentano's "Book Chat," Sarah Korson and Rose Jager performed favors in connection with the book for which I want to express my appreciation here.

The following men and women, most of them miners, their wives or sisters, recalling the old songs and ballads, sang or recited them to me; or helped me otherwise during my research to an extent deserving of special mention:

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I want to acknowledge too, with thanks, the favor of Joseph S. Coons & Co., of Wilkes-Barre, in permitting the use of "The Door Boy's Last Good-bye" a copyrighted song.

I

LIFE IN THE MINE PATCH

NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SIX is a mine patch lying immediately south of Lansford and to the left of the state highway which leads to the Nesquehoning Valley. It was founded during the Mexican War and named Andrewsville after a coal operator of that day. When the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company embarked on mining,[1] it built a colliery on the site, numbering it "six," and the village which it laid out for its miners came to be associated in the popular mind with this number.

I visited it in August, 1925, in the company of William Derby of Lansford who had lived in it many years. The approach to the place was full of silt, a coal mud which surrounds most breakers; and the air was thick with black dust which rasped the throat. They were building a new breaker, reported to be the largest in the world, alongside an old one. The place was hounded by noise — the shriek of a "locie" darting back and forth through the colliery yard like a huge rat; the roar of coal pouring down iron-sheathed chutes in the breaker; the stridor of machinery and the harsh puffing of a railroad locomotive engine up the road. What a contrast to the

[1] Before the 1840s it had confined itself to transporting coal over the Lehigh canal, which it owned, for independent operators who had leased its coal lands.

peace which this "sweet Auburn" must have known in its youth!

Here and there, as Mr. Derby and I walked along the old village lane, a tuft of green peeped out shyly as if in terror of the ogre-like mechanism which makes up the modern colliery. The parallel lines of drab, weather-beaten hovels which stretched away from the towering breakers seemed about to crumble to dust. Most of them consisted of two rooms, one on the first which served as kitchen, dining and living room; and the other up a half floor where the family somehow cooped itself up for the night; a shanty close by served as kitchen in the summer. The Anglo-Saxon had lived in these dwellings for several generations until the coming of the Slav who now occupies them.

In the old days they were fronted by a lawn or flower garden while in the rear a vegetable patch was commonly found, yielding the miner his vegetable needs for the winter. A family was thought well off if it owned a cow, but even the less prosperous had their pigs, chickens or geese which amateur butchers slaughtered as the need came up, but regularly in the fall when the meat was salted away in barrels or boxes. The miners prepared for winter as for a long siege for it was generally a season of idleness and hardship. Before the 1870s, the Lehigh canal was closed from Hallowe'en to April 1 which caused a standstill of mining. The coal from the Panther Creek Valley mines was hauled to Summit Hill from

where a gravity railroad, locally known as the Switchback,[2] carried it down to Mauch Chunk at the head of the canal. Even after a tunnel had been driven through the mountain, and the mines in the valley connected with the tracks of what is now the Central Railroad of New Jersey, making the operators independent of the canal, employment was irregular and uncertain because of frequent local strikes and uncertain markets.

The village green, now almost hidden by a rock dump, is remembered by the old-timers with a sense of reverent delight as in the summer it was their social center. The town well was close by. It was here that the miners came to stretch their bodies and smoke their corncobs when the day's work was done, to be joined by their womenfolk when dishes were washed. Someone might start a familiar song or ballad and in the bat of an eye lash the voice would be swelled by others. "The Shoo Fly," "The Avondale Mine Disaster," and that favorite about the miner growing old and feeble and laying his rusty mining tools away, were sung over and over again. The fiddler was there with his familiar tunes; the village jig dancer who thought himself the best in three counties; the old miner with his reminiscences, and too, the story-teller whose primitive gift for

[2] About 1870, the Switchback was turned over to tourists as steam railroads usurped the trade of the canal. From 1827, when it was built, to 1844, mules rode down with the coal in their own "Pullmans," and there is a tradition in the valley that they enjoyed the fast ride. But they paid dearly for their pleasure, as they had to pull the empty cars back to Summit Hill.

narration would keep his audience enthralled for hours. The boys and girls played "Dog and Bear," "I Spy the Wolf," "Broom and Bear," "Rotten Horses" and "Kick the Ricket," while rounders, a crude form of baseball, was popular with the boys. When the sun went down, a bon-fire was lighted and around it gathered the folk. Number Six had an early bed-time and along about 9 o'clock the men, women and children began bidding one another good night. In the winter when the green could not be enjoyed, the evenings were spent playing cards, singing and dancing in one another's homes. The village had no tavern.

The inhabitants were mostly Irish but there were many Scottish and Welsh families with a smattering of English—about fifty families in all. Until the Mollie Maguire terrorism, the miners were free of race and creed consciousness; and even that tension did not permanently disturb the communal peace and good will. They lived as one big family, trusting, sympathizing and helping one another.

DEAR OLD NUMBER SIX

Written by Joseph Gallagher of Lansford, a former resident, and recited by him for the first time at a public entertainment in Lansford in 1913. This piece takes us back to those far-off days when Number Six was in flower.

Take me back once more to childhood,
Let me climb my mother's knee;
Let me roam the fields and wild wood
As I did in boyish glee.

Let me see the kid goats playing,
  Let me feed the baby chicks,
And gather the eggs the hens were laying,
  At home, in dear old Number Six.

Let me go back a slate picker—
  Just to be a boy once more,
Down the lump coal chutes to flicker,
  Rumpety bump and tumble o'er.
Let me hear the old songs o'er,
  Let me play those boyish tricks,
Let me chew that Clark & Snover,
  At home, in dear old Number Six.

Let me roam the little mountain,
  And cross the dear old Wirley hill,
Let me hear the hound dogs huntin'
  In the gloaming, calm and still;
Let me hear the cat birds singing,
  Let me fish the little cricks,
Let me with the girls go swinging,
  At home, in dear old Number Six.

Let me go pick huckleberries
  Up the rocks on the mountain-side;
Us little lads wi' the little fairies
  Who looked to us to be their guides.
Let me hear the pheasant drumming,
  And watch the woodpecker as he pecks,
Let me see the chipmunks running
  At home, in dear old Number Six.

Let me hear those tales of recess
That only little folks can tell;
Cuddled up upon the green grass
Close beside the old town well,
The man in the moon had charge of the light plant,
Our cottage walls were not of bricks;
Young and old enjoyed the night camp,
On the green, at Number Six.

Let me see the old-time hoedown,
Back in the days when we were young,
In all the coal fields there was no town
Like old Number Six for fun.
The dance went on without a wrangle—
If they should get in a mix,
Shoue [3] would straighten out the tangle,
At home, in dear old Number Six.

Number Six is near the number
Where the silence claims the dead,
Wearing on to peaceful slumber—
The rock banks for her bed.
When she's down and the rock banks scatter
O'er the beds of her noisy geese,
On a granite slab in gold letters:
"May the old town rest in peace."

[3] "Shoue" Millen, a one-legged fiddler and a breaker boss at the time. He died in Colorado. Two sons live in the Panther Creek Valley.

NUMBER SIX PICKS UP AGAIN

SUNG to the air of "Annie Laurie," this piece was made up by Joseph Gallagher, a miner now living in Lansford, in the spring of 1888. The miners of the southern field, embracing Schuylkill and Carbon Counties, struck all winter to preserve their union, the Knights of Labor. At the same time work was going on as usual in the northern field, with the result that the younger men in Number Six left for those parts, unable to stand the strain of continuous idleness. It was a distressing winter for those who remained behind, and the union was ruined.

This song celebrates the brighter day when the breaker has started up again, and the exiles have returned to their familiar hearths, after their stay up country.

Old Number Six is brisky, she has risen from the dead,
When the boys get full of whiskey, they paint the town bright red;
They paint the town bright red, no home till the bottle goes dry,
For old Number Six, my birthplace, I'd lay me down and die.

We've a poll to cast our vote at, a club room to pass our time,

We're out of sight wi' the ladies,[4] especially those that's blind;
Especially those that's blind, for a glimpse at our figure they sigh,
For old Number Six, my birthplace, I'd lay me down and die.

How well do I remember the games we used to play!
When I was young and tender, it seems like yesterday;
It seems like yesterday, those good old days gone by,
For old Number Six, my birthplace, I'd lay me down and die.

[4] In the good graces of.

BEAR RIDGE, A DESERTED VILLAGE

I OBTAINED this ballad one Sunday afternoon in August from John J. Johnson, Jr., superintendent of the Drifton mines, near Hazleton, the son of the composer. He began to appreciate his father's creations just in time to save the few manuscripts which remained, and graciously permitted me to copy three of them, of which this is one.

That same rainy afternoon I met his mother, a charming little woman past 80, and his sister, Miss Dolly Johnson. The two lived by themselves in the first of a row of red-painted frame houses which stood on the other side of the trolley car trestle. Folks liked the ballads her husband composed, Mrs. Johnson told me. Those having names in them were more popular, as people liked to be sung about in public—except when the things said about them were not flattering. Though he had never taken a music lesson, Jack Johnson played the banjo real well. Frequently, of a summer evening, sitting on his porch, he sang his ballads to the accompaniment of a banjo, as his fellow villagers looked on and listened.

Johnson was born in Summit Hill, Carbon County, in 1846. When a boy of ten his parents took him to Bear Ridge, one of the earliest of Schuylkill Valley

mine villages, which went under eclipse after the slope was abandoned, about 1867. He then removed to Freeland. He was a hoisting engineer at the Beaver Meadow colliery in 1918 when he became seriously ill. Taken to a Philadelphia hospital, he died there a few weeks later.

Some days after calling on the Johnsons, I was guided over the landmarks of the deserted village by Thomas Morgan whose father had worked in the old slope. I found him in Cumbola, a village this side of the hill which had hidden Bear Ridge from the turnpike. He was squat and square-shouldered, and being only 60, was too young to remember the mine in operation.

Between puffs of his smutty corncob he recalled chipmunks, pheasants, squirrels, wild turkeys and pigeons roaming or flying on Sharp Mountain nearby; and saw again the days when boys and girls of the Schuylkill Valley went peppermint picking in the bulrushes that grew on the acres which since 1924 have been silted by a new operation; and told how the miners and their womenfolk gathered to sing come-all-ye's and to dance the waltzes and quadrilles of the day.

Down yonder where lay those conglomerate rocks had stood the engine house. Some of the bed-plate bolts which had kept the engine in position were still there, thick with the rust of nearly sixty years. A scummy pool of water recalled the site of the old dam. A few strides away was the site of the en-

trance to the old mine, which had been filled in with slate and small-sized coal. A full-blossomed wild cherry tree reared itself high above us, and seemed to have sprouted out of the slope itself.

About a half dozen homes had survived the devastating hand of time. Like the giant oak, beech, hickory and chestnut trees which abounded near them, their heads were bending low under the weight of age. What memories did they hold fast within their crumbling walls! One was a log cabin, the first I had seen in the anthracite coal region. It was still in use, the mansion of a Polish miner and his family; a modern dwelling stood right next to it. For a moment I was so moved by the sight of it that I felt an impulse to doff my hat out of reverence to its age. But I had already disconcerted the Polish couple living in it so much by my questions that I was loath to amaze them with such an act. I had all I could do to convince them that I was not a tax collector, nor a Prohibition agent, but only a simple fellow indulging a flair for the odd and strange along life's highway.

The cabin was kept from falling apart by patches here and there. Its logs had been cut out of the very chestnuts and hemlocks which the pioneers must have found in this one-time forest primeval, and were cemented with mud and clay. The inside walls were wainscoted which I thought an unpardonable anachronism. Morgan remembered, however, when the walls were made of twelve-inch hemlock boards

and so my sense of fitness of things was satisfied. Up to this time Morgan had talked much. After drawing two or three puffs at his pipe, he looked around the room and fell to contemplation. Memories! It is a winter evening. The crude oddments of furniture are pushed back into a corner. From the wall twinkles an oil lamp. The fiddler takes his seat on the table, and the rough young cavaliers and their ladies fair are off on an entrancing waltz. . . . "Many's the night I danced here, son," he mused.

We took an old team road on our way back. It lead to a small bridge spanning the Little Schuylkill and from there to the State highway, still known locally as the Tamaqua pike. Morgan talked and I listened—and dreamed of another day which he tried to recapture in his plain, homely phrases. The sun had gone down beyond Port Carbon and night was falling fast when we parted.

BEAR RIDGE, A DESERTED VILLAGE

I'd like to see that dear spot
  Where that old breaker stood,
In a place called Bear Ridge
  Where I spent my dear boyhood;
The hillside and the valley, too,
  On them I long to gaze—
In dear old Schuylkill County, boys,
  The place where I was raised.

Chorus

It makes me sad and lonely now
When I think of years gone by,
That I spent at the old breaker
When I was but a boy.
My youthful days are past and gone—
Old age is coming fast,
The only thing that is left to me
Is a picture of the past.

When I first went to Bear Ridge
I mean to let you know;
In eighteen hundred and fifty-six—
Nearly forty years ago.
I had no fear upon me then,
My heart was young and gay,
And around the hills of Bear Ridge, boys,
I spent many a happy day.

Years have brought on changes
To that dear little town;
The slopes were drowned out
And the breaker was torn down.
The grass is growing fresh and green
O'er the place where I used to play,
And the people who were living there
They all have moved away.

I'd like to meet some comrades, boys,
That were working with me there;

When the place was shut down,
We scattered everywhere.
I moved to New Philadelphia,
And others they went West;
Some of them are now dead and gone—
I hope they are at rest.

I came to Luzerne County
In eighteen sixty-seven;
In the month of April
The date it was eleven.
From there to Carbon County,
Where I was born, you know;
But my heart still clings to Schuylkill, boys,
Wherever I may go.

I must leave off writing,
And bid you all good-bye;
When I think of those happy days
The tears come to my eye.
I had no trouble on me then—
No hardships, care or strife,
But since, like many a poor workingman,
I've had my ups and downs in life.

THE SHOO FLY

AS one approaches New Philadelphia from Pottsville, his eyes fall on a dismal, sombre landscape —the giant banks of culm and rock that seem to have erupted out of the earth in huge mouthfuls, settling on these once lovely hills; the ground under your feet still sodden after these many years with silt and culm; ugly stumps and withered ghosts of trees that once held their heads up high; and that stygian stream they call the little Schuylkill reduced from its high estate to the degrading level of a carrier of mine sulphur water, making its way through these wasted acres, stealthily, as if ashamed to show its face in the light of the sun. You look about you for a sight of the breaker and can see it only in your mind's eye. Here, dear reader, once stood the "Shoo Fly" colliery which a ballad dashed off in the heat of inspiration by a village schoolmaster transformed into a thing of legendary lore.

This schoolmaster, a young man of 30 named Felix O'Hare, taught his rough pupils at night in a shack at Silver Creek. The boys could not go to school during the day because they had to work. Self-educated and far indeed from being erudite, judged by the standards of to-day, O'Hare nevertheless had the respect of his neighbors for the learning

that he did have. His home (it is now occupied by his sister, Mrs. Katherine Casserly and her sons) being on the Tamaqua turnpike, he had to pass through Valley Furnace, commonly called the Furnace, for short, to and from school. In this mine patch lived an old Irish woman whose respect for that l'arnin' of his was exceeded in depth only by the faith she had in the hereafter; and whenever they met she poured out her heart to him and sought his advice on the troubles that harassed her.

This was in the '70s, a most distressing decade in the history of the anthracite coal mining industry. It was the heydey of the independent and speculative operator; mines shut down overnight at the slightest whim of the market; or when operators lacked capital to open new veins; or by strikes which occurred frequently. Nor had the industry recovered from the great slump that had overtaken it at the end of the Civil War. And so there was trouble enough for the simple soul. No wonder she was nearly distracted—

For it's down in the Shoo Fly they cut a bad vein,
Likewise they've condemned the old slope at the Furnace,
And all me fine neighbors must leave it again.

Being of a sympathetic nature, O'Hare listened patiently. One day, I presume, her wails had touched him more deeply than ever, for that night he remained in the kitchen long after his family had gone to bed, scribbling feverishly over a stray scrap of paper. And thus was born a masterpiece of folk bal-

ladry. He tried out the hauntingly simple words and the plaintive melody on some of his friends and their response was spontaneous and enthusiastic. Within a week a half dozen taverns along the pike echoed the touching ballad. It spread to many parts of the anthracite coal region and even a music hall audience in far-off Philadelphia wept over it. Its simple pathos gave it a universal appeal but I believe it would have been popular among miners even without all of this intrinsic charm because it articulated a mood widely prevalent in the hard coal fields at the time.

The ballad never attained formal publication, as far as I could learn, and for this reason the name of Felix O'Hare hardly penetrated to other coal fields, though the ballad became familiar. Even the old Irish woman who had inspired it appeared not to have suspected her young confidant, for on hearing it sung for the first time, and sensing that she was the subject celebrated, gave a curse upon the head of the man dead or alive who had contrived it. Such were the rewards of authorship in those days! O'Hare himself seems never to have asserted his rights to the creation. He was a short, stocky man, distinguished for his large head and curly locks; and for a rollicking good nature. Born in Canada, he was brought to the Schuylkill Valley when a child. He began life as a slate picker before he was ten, as did most miners' sons of the period, and by dint of burning much whale oil, managed to acquire what

we might to-day call merely the rudiments of an education, but which was quite sufficient to qualify him as a schoolmaster in those pioneer days.

He continued to keep his night school at Silver Creek and other mine patches in Blythe Township for thirty years after he wrote "The Shoo Fly." One evening he did not come home and early the next morning they found his body floating in the muddy waters of Silver Creek. How he had come into the creek remains a mystery to this day and a coroner's jury has never been called to solve it. Mrs. Casserly told me that her brother suffered from heart trouble and one may presume that as he walked along the stream his heart stopped and he rolled into it. He left a widow and five children.

The Shoo Fly Colliery was operated into the '90s by its owners, The Alliance Coal Mining Company, and abandoned after its upper seams had been worked out. Patrick J. Kelly whose widow and children now live in New Philadelphia, was outside foreman and a man named Michael Flanagan was boss inside. The Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, which controls the Alliance, has been prospecting on the site of the former colliery for more than five years and the people in the valley are looking forward to the launching of a new working over the old.

The following copy of "The Shoo Fly" was obtained for me by B. I. Curran, a gray-haired school teacher of Centralia, Columbia County, who was my host one Sunday in March, 1925. Through an

early spring shower we made the rounds of several old-time ballad singers, but met with no success. Curran, however, felt that he could unearth several old ballads if given time, as Centralia had many singers in former days. Some weeks later I received an envelope from him containing "The Shoo Fly," "Performing His Manual Labor in the Barroom" and "The Old Miner's Refrain."

THE SHOO FLY

I

As I went a-walking one fine summer's morning,
It's down by the Furnace I chanced for to stroll,
I espied an old lady, I'm sure she was eighty,
At the foot of the bank and she rootin' for coal;
And as I drew nigh her she sat on her hunkers,
And to fill her scuttle she then did begin—
To herself she was humming this mournful ditty,
And this is the song the old lady did sing:

CHORUS

Crying, "Ochone! Sure I'm nearly distracted,
For it's down in the Shoo Fly they cut a bad vein;
Likewise they've condemned the old slope at the Furnace,
And all me fine neighbors must leave it again.

"'Twas only last evenin' that I asked McGinley
To tell me the reason the Furnace gave o'er.

He told me the company had spent eighty-thousand [1]
And finding no prospects they'd spend no more.[1]
He said that the Diamond it was rather bony,
Besides too much dirt in the seven-foot vein;
And as for the Mammoth, there's no length of gangway,
Unless they buy land from Abel and Swayne.

"And as for Michael Rooney, I owe him some money;
Likewise Patrick [2] Kearns, I owe him some more;
And as for old John Eagen, I ne'er see his wagon,
But I think of the debt that I owe in his store.
I owe butcher and baker, likewise the shoemaker,
And for plowing me garden I owe Pat McQuail;
Likewise his old mother, for one thing and th'other,
And to drive away bother, an odd quart of ale.

"But if God spares me children until the next summer,
Instead of a burden, they will be a gain;
And out of their earnin's I'll save an odd dollar,
And build a snug house at the 'Foot of the Plane.' [3]
Then rollin' in riches, in silks and in satins,
I ne'er shall forget the days I was poor,
And likewise the neighbors that stood by me children,
Kept want and starvation away from me door.

"And if you should happen to cross the Broad Mountain,
Step in and sit down on me cane-bottomed chairs;
Take off your fixin's, lay them on the bureau,
While I in the kitchen refreshments prepare;—

[1] These two lines were supplied from another source.
[2] Frank?
[3] Mahanoy Plane on the other side of Broad Mountain, where new mines had recently been opened.

And while we are seated so snug at the table,
Enjoying the fruits of a strong cup of tea,
We'll talk of the quiltin's we had at the Furnace—
Me heart does rejoice an old neighbor to see."

2

This variant I obtained from Joseph Gallagher of Lansford.

As I went a-walking one fine summer's morning,
It's down by the Furnace I chanced for to stroll.
I met an old lady, I'm sure she was eighty,
At the foot of the banks and she hokin' for coal.

CHORUS

"Ocheon! but I'm nearly distracted.
It's down in the Shoo Fly they struck a bad vein,
And now the ould place is condemned; and the Furnace,
And all me fine neighbors must l'ave me again.

"I have but one apron and that's alapaca,
Me hair is like bristles for the want of a comb;
Me husband's gone off on the s'arch of employment—
To Mahanoy Valley this night he does roam.

"In your four-in-hand coach when you cross o'er the mountain,
Drop into me cabin, sit down in the chair,
In honor of bygones we'll sample me poteen [4] —
To think of those days sure it bleaches me hair.

[4] Hard liquor.

"We'll talk of the nights we had at the dances,
When the b'ys swung the girls till we feared they'd squeal,
How wee Micky Flanagan would step off the lances,
And how Kitty Murphy would knock off the reel."

A TRIP TO DRIFTON IN JUNE, 1906

DRIFTON, a village about five miles northeast of Hazleton, is known all over the anthracite coal region as the home of Mrs. Eckley B. Coxe, affectionately called "The Angel of the Anthracite." Her husband was one of the most powerful independent operators of his day before he sold his interests to the Lehigh Valley Coal Company. His widow, now past 80, lives in the old homestead across the road from the big house occupied by the mine superintendent, John J. Johnson, Jr., son of the composer of this and other ballads. Mrs. Coxe is beloved for the many philanthropies in behalf of the miners and their families in Drifton she has launched and maintained these many years.[1]

A TRIP TO DRIFTON IN JUNE, 1906

I took a walk one morning, the weather it was clear,
I went to see old Drifton, a place I once loved dear,
Drifton looked so lonely, believe me what I say—
There is lots of old neighbors dead and gone and others moved away.

I stood at Wagner's corner and took a look around.
There is lots of changes came to pass since I lived in that town,

[1] Mrs. Coxe has died since this was written.

The people that are living there, I don't know; they feel
Drifton is not like it used to be, since the Valley made the deal.[2]

The Valley made a great change in Drifton all around,
There was lots of people working there that had to leave the town.
The D. S. & S.[3] office is abandoned, and the engines taken away;
There they tore the roundhouse down, that is what I heard them say.

I went to see John Cunningham, with him I had a talk.
Then to see George Davis, I continued on my walk.
I happened to meet Ben Shaffer, his moving (van) passing by,
And he was glad to see me, and to see him so was I.

I struck off for Freeland, and I stopped on my way
To have a look at Woodside, where I spent many a happy day.
When I first went to Woodside, the truth I will relate
To work for H. L. Fuller in 1868.

Freeland was in its infancy, it was not built up at all;
Just three houses in the place and they were very small.

[2] Coxe Bros. & Company, which owned Drifton mines and village, sold their interests to the Lehigh Valley Coal Company in 1905.

[3] The Delaware, Schuylkill and Susquehanna Railroad, which ran into all of the Coxe Bros. & Company collieries. Its yard was at Roan, one mile south of Hazleton, from where it carried the coal with its own locomotive engines and cars and on its own tracks as far as Ashmore. From Ashmore, it operated on the Lehigh Valley Railroad tracks to Perth Amboy, N. J., its terminus.

There was Johnson and Joe Lindsay, that I may never sin—
The other was a tavern, kept by Pat McGlenn.

If some people they could see it now, I'm sure they'd be
surprised,
Freeland is a borough, factory there likewise.
You can stand on any corner, see houses near and far,
And on the street called Center, they run the Electric Car.

Oh dear! but I was foolish; but now I am too late.
When I was young at Woodside, if I had to speculate.
But I am like many others, it's no use to regret—
The future was a mystery, but the past we can't forget.

OLD WOODSIDE

THE Woodside, a slope colliery then employing some 200 men and boys, was abandoned during the Knights of Labor strike in the winter of 1887–8. Rather than take back their men after the strike was over and the union ruined, Coxe Bros. & Company, the operators, permitted the pumps to gather rust and the gangways and chambers to choke with water. To the miners of Freeland that meant the end of Woodside but those who have survived the 38 years since that time have lived to see it working again. A group of capitalists acquired the rights to the property and during the summer of 1925 the water was pumped out. Among the objects found by the first gang of men to enter the abandoned gangways, in July, was a pair of some miner's shoes. The mine was started up again at the end of the 1925–1926 tri-district strike.

The reopening of an old mine brings pleasant excitement into a community: not only does it recreate a source of employment, but it stirs the memories of gray heads who then color the stream of conversation for a whole season or more. But there is also a less attractive side to the picture, as Rag Row can tell you. Now Rag Row is a street in Freeland that acquired its colorful name under the same law in

nomenclature as did Red-Nose Mike, notorious in the annals of Luzerne County. It is a street, moreover, settled by a colony of Italian miners and their families directly over the old Woodside mine. In back of their small, dust-eaten homes, these miners had sowed seeds of bean, mangoes, garlic and onions —vegetables dear to the palate of Italy's children. They cultivated their patches in the spring and early summer, after working hours. Back in the old home across the Atlantic, they had known the ritual of hard labor in fields and had tasted the sweet satisfaction of harvest-time, and so this was as if they had returned to an old love. But to many in Rag Row there was to be no harvest. Once the water was pumped out from the gangways below, the earth opened and the mine, as if made ravenous by a 38-year hunger, swallowed their half-matured crops. Nor did it stop there: at least one cellar dropped down the gaping maw, and three or four homes, resisting the downward pull, were twisted and tilted as so much papier-mache.

During the '70s, the miners of Freeland and the surrounding countryside, sang a ditty composed by Jack Johnson of which the following are some of the lines:

Hubbabub Hullabaloo,
Two hundred cars will do.

Hoist away, every day,
Clean the coal; make it pay.

In Freeland so frisky,
They sell ice cream and whiskey.

So whack for old Woodside,
It's my darling old place.

MACKIN'S PORCH

MACKIN BROTHERS' general store stood at Laurel and Scott streets in Five Points, now known by its more respectable but less picturesque name of East End, in Wilkes-Barre. The building was of frame construction, flat-roofed and two stories high. Having become ramshackled after an existence of half a century or more, it was torn down several years ago and its passing evoked many wistful regrets.

The store was owned by Edward and Thomas Mackin; the former was also for many years outside boss of the Black Diamond colliery of the Hudson Coal Company. Across its counters were sold food for the miner's table, clothing for himself and members of his family and sundries that he needed for his work in the mine. For a long time too, it was the northeastern terminus of the East End line of the Wilkes-Barre Railway Company until its extension to Miner's Mills, a nearby patch.

But it was the porch and all the associations clinging about it that wove Mackin Brothers' store into the very fibre of Five Points tradition. Over it hung the spirit of the ancient caravansary. Three successive generations of miners sought its hospitality to escape for a fleeting hour or two the desert full of

poverty, drudgery, and haunting tragedy in which they dwelt. Here, chewing their tobacco, smoking their clay or corncob pipes, swearing oaths with the gusto that befitted their hard, dangerous calling, they bandied the gossip of mine and neighborhood; vaunted their skill with drill and squib; sang over and over again the familiar ballads; and regaled one another with reminiscences and twice-told tales. In summer or winter, in good weather or bad, those coal-marked fellaheen foregathered here, coming soon after supper-time to stay until shortly after the curfew blew at 9 o'clock. The cock's first crow was their cue for rising, which accounted for their early bed-time.

All that went on on this porch was reduced to a ballad in 1892 by a young miner named Con Carbon. It was written to the lively measure of "The Flag and Reel." The piece spread to many parts of the region, and I first heard it in McAdoo, Schuylkill County.

Con Carbon was born in Hazleton in 1871 and as a boy of 9 entered the Audenried breaker to pick slate. His sister, Mrs. James Sheerin of 63 Bowman Street, Wilkes-Barre, upon whom I called in August, 1925, told me some of the tragic incidents associated with his career of slate picker. She remembered particularly how he would come home at nightfall too fatigued to take food or even to talk, and how their widowed mother would lift him in her arms to wash the coal grime from his little body, weeping in anguish and motherly compassion as she did so. For

months and months this was a daily ritual in that home. The family removed to Wilkes-Barre when Con was about 12 years old.

The miners of the anthracite coal region owe much to Con Carbon—more than they are aware of, probably. He was Entertainer-Extraordinary to the late John Mitchell during the darkest hours of that leader's fight to establish the Union in the hard coal fields. Weighed down by worry, saddened on the one hand by the impatience of his oppressed miners, hounded on the other by the active hostility of George F. Baer and his divinely-appointed colleagues, Mitchell sought the balm of this man's talents on many, many occasions. And when in 1907 Carbon died, he sent the bereaved family a letter setting down how deeply he felt the loss.

Carbon had wit in abundance, a keen eye for whimsical twists in human experiences, a sense of simple pathos. Added to these qualities were a good tenor voice and a colorful Irish brogue. He inspired a whole battalion of imitators, some of whom still hold forth in the hard coal fields. But his superiority over them lies not only in his ability as entertainer, but in the more important fact that he created his material, however crude his technique may have been.

He started such a demand for his ballads, some of which he sang and others recited, that he collected a few in a pamphlet which he entitled "Con Carbon's Own Songster," selling copies at ten cents each. Mrs. Sheerin was kind enough to let me have one. Its

blue paper cover has faded and many of its pages have become yellow-tinged. Practically all the contents appear in phonetic Irish dialect showing a hearty disdain of syntax, prosody and punctuation. Carbon, it would appear, was a proverbial diamond in the rough. "When the Breaker Starts Up Full Time" and "Mackin's Porch," two ballads which I had obtained from other sources, are to be found in this songster. It also contains "Gossip in a Street Car," by which the atmosphere of a typical mine village of bygone days is passed on to the gathering.

MACKIN'S PORCH

I

Recited for me by Dennis Coyle of East End, Wilkes-Barre.

To learn the way of Five Points folk,
If you take and give a joke,
Go on Scott street for a mope,
    And stop at Mackin's store.
First go to Boyle's and take your wet,
Then go back to Mackin's step,
Do it quick or you'll be left,
    At 8 it won't hold no more.

'Bout half past 6 or 7 o'clock,
Then the men begin to flock,
And tell of cars they were docked;
    Of cars lost and found.
Of dirty coal and lumps of [1] chunks,
Firin' holes and sackin' Hunks,

[1] Or?

And the way they have to work and grunt!
For a livin' underground.

CHORUS

The Far Downs and Cannaught men
Fight, and then make up again;
Dutch and Scotch and English men—
All like chickens in a pen.
The powder smoke does be so thick,
You could not cut it with a pick,
The smell of gas would make you sick,
In front of Mackin's store.

Firing in the face and rib,
Driving headin's, lighting squibs,
Telling big down-country fibs,
Drilling and tamping holes.
On the bottom raising rock,
Building chutes and standing props,
Waiting at the blacksmith shop,
And damning laborers' souls.

Working on the flat and pitch,
Laying roads and cleaning ditch,
One day poor and the next day rich,
Working in bad air.
Lifting cars upon the rail,
Chasing drivers from their pail,
You'd swear it was a sheriff's sale,
The way they gather there.

This man told tales to the boss,
This man last week two cars lost,

Another man set off the gas,
Another lost his job.
Yesterday my cars were stopped,
Day before three-quarters docked,
Must load them better at the top
Be cripes, or I'll be robbed.

Winter or the summer-time,
Whether rain or whether shine,
Every man is there in line—
Seated on the step.
Some are drawing fine big pays,
Others fifty cents a day,
Not enough to pay their way;
The half of them's in debt.

SECOND CHORUS

Many and many a man is killed,
Many a quart of blood is spilt,
Some are carried home in quilts—
Burnt that bad their skin does melt.
The Prospect and Conyngham,[2]
Empire and Nottingham,[2]
At hoisting coal ain't worth a damn
Compared to Mackin's step.

2

The following is the ballad exactly as it appears in the songster:

[2] Colleries in and around Wilkes-Barre.

To learn the way of Five Point folk, you must give, then take a joke,
Fill your pipe and have a smoke, and make for Mackin's store.
First go to Boyle's and have a wet, then run back to Mackin's steps,
Do it quick or you'll get left, for at eight, 'twill hold no more.

Between half-past 6 or 7 o'clock, then the men begin to flock,
And talk of cars that they were docked, of cars were lost and found.
Dirty coal and lumps of chunks, firing holes and sacking Hunks,
And the way they've to work and grunt, for a living under ground.

Firing in the face and rib, driving heading, lighting squib,
Telling big down-country fibs, drill and tamping holes.
On the bottom raising rock, building chutes and standing props,
Waiting at the blacksmith's shop, and damning laborers' souls.

Working on the flat and pitch, laying roads and cleaning ditch,
One day poor, the next day rich, working in all bad air.
Lifting cars upon the rail, chasing drivers from their pail,
You'd swear it was a sheriff's sale, the way they gather there.

CHORUS

Far Downs and the Cannaught men, fight and then make up again;
Dutch and Scotch and English men, all like chickens in a pen.

This man told tales to the boss, this man last month two cars lost,
Another man set off the gas, another lost his job.
Yesterday my cars were stopped, day before three-quarters docked,
I must load them better on the top, be cripes, or I'll be robbed.

Winter or the summer time, rain or snow, or hail, or shine,
Every man is there in line, seated on the step.
Some are drawing fine big pay, others fifty cents a day,
Not enough to pay their way, the half of them's in debt.

SECOND CHORUS

The powder smoke does be that thick you couldn't cut it with a pick,
And smell of gas would make you sick each night on Mackin's porch.

Many's the good man there's killed, many's the quart of blood is spilled,
Some are carried home in a quilt, burnt that bad their skin does wilt.
The Prospect and the Conagham, the Empire and Nottingham,
At hoisting coal ain't worth a ram compared to Mackin's porch.

GOSSIP IN A STREET CAR

IN the interest of clearness I have inserted quotation marks and an occasional apostrophe in this piece. I have also corrected misspellings where the intent was obviously not phonetic and appeared to have been caused by poor typography, as in the words "troubles" and "heart." Otherwise the ballad that follows is the same as appears in Con Carbon's songster.

I was riding in a street car, through a little mining town,
Before we reached our destination the car had broken down,
And while the men were fixing it, a miner's wife came in;
With a woman, who was in the car, at once began to chin.
The woman who was in the car from the village moved away,
Where the other one had known her, they were neighbors, I dare say.
They told of all their troubles since the day that they'd been wed,
And if you're time's not precious, I will tell you all was said.

"Well, dear ould Mrs. Mulligan, an' how is all yer care"?
"For mesel' I'm feelin' lovely, me heart's as loight as air;
I could sing wid joy this moment, sence Paddy's quit the booze,
"Tis now I kin have dresses, an' me baby kin have shoes."
"But how is all the Gallaghers, an' Murphys, how are they?
An' the Boyles, I didn't see thim sence the day I moved away?
An' how is all yer own care, has Mickey still the cough?
An' how is Jamsey walkin' sence the leg was taken off"?

"Well, Mis' Toole, there's no use grumblin', we're not sent
here fer fun,
Me man is sick those [1] two wakes wid a fillon on the thumb,
But Mickey's cough is splanded, no better could I wish.
An' James is walkin' lovely sence he got the artifish.
But did ye hear about the Murphys? No? Well their
little baby died,
An' she made a holy show av hersel', the way she bawled
an' cried.
She did cut up ridiculous, she sez, 'bring back me dear,'
An' the child was hardly buried till the can was sent out
fer beer.

"It's Hungareys live in your block, an' they are a dirty
clan.
There's only jis wan woman, an' about fifty-seven men.
An' how they live or phat they ate, 'tis more than I can say,
But they all work 'round the breaker fer about fifty cents
a day.
An' Mullin's have a piano, an' Maggie's practising,
She's feriver at this song called 'The Marriage Bells did
Ring.'
'Pon me soul she has us dafened, fer she's at it noon an'
night,
But ye'd ought to see Miss Flannigan, she looks a holy
sight.

"She got ivery blessed tooth pulled, let me see, it was las'
wake,
An' she looks jis loike a monkey, ivery toime she goes to
spake.

[1] These?

An' Paddy Burke is buried, an' so is Cougin's wife,
An' little Jamsey Mack will be a cripple all his life.
He was hurted at the fire, did you not hear av it?
Sure Snyder, the Ditchman's double block, was burnt up ivery bit.
All the gingens in the town was out, they'd niver git it quinch
Af it was not fer my Paddy, ould John Burke and Mickey Lynch.

"'Twas thim phat got the fire out, fer at it they did stick,
Didn't I laugh at number eight hose cart, till I thought that I'd be sick?
They put their hose across the railroad track, oh Lor', but I did laugh;
An' the noight ixpress run over it, an' cut it roight in half.
Then the horse got frightened, wid the hose cart ran away,
They found the horse nixt mornin' more than twinty miles away.
Oh, it was in all the papers, 'twas a joke wid people here,
An' ye say ye did not raid av it?; bedad, I think that's queer."

"Arrah, woman, I hear nothin', people's so strange phere I live,
An' to be once more amongst youse, jis one-half me loife I'd give—
Oh, the noights we sat on my ould porch, af not mine 'twas on yours,
An' af children in the town was sick, 'twas there they got the cures,
The stories phat we used to tell, the jokes an' iverything.
An' the darlin', dear ould Irish come-all-yes we did sing.

We could tell how much the breaker worked, an' ivery day she lost,
An' how much our men had comin' after payin' all the cost.

"But those days are gone feriver, they will never come again,
As the great Salvation Army sez, till we catch the golden train.
But did Mary Casey marry the dude she used to mash—
The flup phat wore the eye glass an' a seven-hair mustache?
Wid his face so white an' wither, an' thirty pounder cane,
The wan ye'd think that would dissolve af he stood long in the rain."
"Oh yes, I do remember him. Ah, she gave that thing the slip.
She had two beaus since those buck; the same Mary is a clip.

"She's at ivery ball an' party, her friends she has disgraced,
An' I'm tould, but don't say nothin', that she laces at the waist.
An' my Mary Ann she tould, that she paints and powders, too,
But fer heaven's sake don't mention it, or spake av it, will you"?
" 'Pon me soul I'll niver mention it, but I'm not at all surprised.
The toime she claned the house fer me, she was powdered to the eyes.
An' paint on top av that again—she wuz a holy sight to see."
The conductor put his head in then, and cried out, "Wilkes-Barre."

WHEN THE BREAKER STARTS UP FULL-TIME

THE coal breaker, a straggling hulk of a building, is the most characteristic feature of the anthracite landscape.

Standing close to the mouth of a mine slope or shaft, it frequently may be found hugging a hillside. Almost from the time that the first breaker cast its shadow, miners have invested it with symbolical significance.

To this day when a colliery resumes operation after a period of idleness, the saying is not that work has begun but that the breaker has started up full-time.

It is in this building that the amorphous lumps which the miner has extracted from the seam are cleansed and cracked into standard sizes for the market.

Con Carbon wrote this ballad in the '80s. It is sung to the tune of "My Pearl Is a Bowery Girl." The following version I obtained from Daniel Brennan, of McAdoo, Schuylkill County, an old-time ballad singer.

WHEN THE BREAKER STARTS UP FULL-TIME

I

Our troubles are o'er Mrs. Murphy, 1
For the Ditchman next door tells me straight,
That the mines will start full-time on Monday—
That's phat he tells me 'tanny rate.
Sure the boss, he says, told him this morning,
As he was 'bout entering the mine,
That the coal is quite scarce roun' 'bout New York,
So the rumors is work full-time.

CHORUS

And its boo-hoo if the news be true,
Me store bill's the first thing I'll pay,
A stuff parlor shuit and a lounge I will buy,
And an organ for Bridgie, hurray.
Me calico skirt I will throw in the dirt—
In me silk one won't I cut a shine?
Cheer up, Mrs. Murphy, we all will ate turkey,
When the breaker starts up full-time.

I'll ne'er stick me fist in a washtub,
The Chinee man he'll have me trade,
I'll ne'er pick a coal off the dirt bank;
I'll buy everything ready-made.
We'll dress up our children like fairies,
We'll build up a house big and fine,

And we'll move away from the Hungaries—
When the breaker starts up full-time.

The Hungaries won't work with me Paddy;
They say too much no good his place.
They always lose time after pay-day,
Its meself sure that ne'er liked that race.
They won't load their cairs off the livil,
They want runnin' chutes, do ye mind?
But we'll chase thim away to the divil—
When the breaker starts up full-time.

2

The following is the ballad as it appears in Con Carbon's songster:

Our troubles are o'er, Mrs. Murphy,
The Ditchman naxt dure tells me sthrate,
That the mines will start full toime on Monday,
That's phat he tells me 'taney rate;
The boss he said told him this mornin',
As he wos 'bout antrin' the mine,
That the coal was quite scarce down 'bout New York,
So the rumors are work full toime.

Chorus

Boo Hoo! af this news be thrue,
Me store bill's the first thing I'll pay,
Then a stuff parlor shute an' a lounge I'll buy,
And an organ for Bridgie, hurray;

Me calico skirt I will throw in the dirt,
In silk won't I cut a shoin?
Dhry your eye out, Miss Murphy, we all will ate turkey,
When the breaker starts up full toime.

I'll ne'er put me fist in the washtub,
The Shiney man will get me thrade,
I'll ne'er pick a coal af the dirt bank,
I'll buy everything ready made.
I'll driss up me shildren like fairies,
I'll build up a house big and foine,
And move away from the Hungareys,
Fan the breaker starts up full toime.

The Hungareys won't work wid me Paddy,
They say too much no good dis place,
They always loose toime after pay day,
'Tis mesilf, faith, that ne'er liked that race.
They won't load their cars af the livel,
They want running shutes, de yes moind,
But we'll shase thim away to the divil
Fan the breaker starts up full toime.

II

WHEN THE HEART WAS LIGHT

EDWARD FOLEY

EDWARD FOLEY, author of "Mining in the Barroom," "The Pretty Maid Milking Her Goat" and other ballads, was possibly the most characteristic of the miner-minstrels who held sway in the anthracite coal region during the last century. He was born at Black Heath, a patch near Minersville, Schuylkill County in 1845, lived many years at Bell's Tunnel, Mount Carmel, and roamed the hard coal fields singing his own ballads and accompanying himself on his violin. It was one of his eccentricities to fear, and fearing, hate railroads. He was known to walk the forty miles or more from Wilkes-Barre to Mount Carmel to avoid riding in them. A friend, knowing his habits, once bought a railroad ticket for him with the change collected at a shindig where he had done his stuff so that he might ride home in state. But Foley promptly redeemed it at the next station and spent the money at the nearest barroom.

In the manner of minstrels in the middle ages, he preferred to stroll from village to village, knowing that the violin under his arm would open miners' hearts and the doors of their homes to him. Though a miner, he was more often seen with his violin than with a pick or drill.

Foley was a big, heavily-built man. He had the

simplicity and the refreshing ingenuousness of a child with all the irresponsibility of your true Bohemian. To him life consisted of a song, a story, a hearty meal and a drink, and for years it was one round after another of christenings, weddings, and parties where the symbol of joyous hospitality was the glass. He was the darling of his tribe, loved by his fellows who exacted tribute for that love until he could give of himself no more. He died at the dawn of the new century in the Packer hospital at Sunbury. Despite a busy social life, he found time to be married twice, the second venture being with a widow and family. He has a daughter living in Philadelphia and two step-sons in Mount Carmel.

Foley was a prolific ballad author but I have been able to resurrect only two of his pieces—namely, "Mining in the Barroom" which I first heard as "Performing His Manual Labor in the Barroom" of which I have two variants, and "The Pretty Maid Milking Her Goat." Miss Foley, his niece, who lives in the minstrel's house, permitted me to search through his old papers and newspaper clippings with the hope that they might yield the treasures I sought, but to no avail. Foley, like the rest of the miner bards in the anthracite coal fields, appeared not to have been conscious of fame nor to have given much thought to the possible interest in him of posterity. Some of his ballads he had printed on broadsides; others he simply wrote down on paper for his own benefit; while in many instances

he stopped at improvisation, depending upon his memory or the memory of others to preserve the lines issuing from his lips.

From two sources qualified to bear testimony, in my opinion, I learned that composition with him was a thing of spontaneity: an inspiration came to him with the suddenness of a stroke of lightning which sent him into abstraction immediately. If he happened to be in a group the new ballad usually put into verse the scene, the purpose of the occasion and the names of the more interesting persons present. Though never having taken a music lesson in his life, he was not only able to play the violin tolerably well but to improvise on it tunes to fit his ballads.

"Mining in the Barroom," better remembered as "Performing His Manual Labor in the Barroom" was widely popular. Not only did it paint a scene typical all over the anthracite coal region but it caught the spirit of it. Whatever the saloon may have been in the cities it certainly was the center of the miner's social life in the hard coal fields; over his glass of beer he discussed affairs of home and village and exchanged experiences of the mine, which was the best diversion he could afford. Now in every saloon there were always a certain number who regularly got drunk, especially on pay-nights, and in the recklessness born of their condition loudly boasted of their skill as miners, to the amusement of their fellows who knew them at their true worth. They might go through various motions as if to make

convincing the illusions they meant to create. Occasionally a barkeeper would yell at them: "Here cut it out. Get the safety lamp, you'll blow the place up." Some such sally would throw the customers into hilarious laughter.

"Mining in the Barroom" was given to the region for the first time by Foley himself at the wedding of a niece at Mount Carmel one evening in October, 1892. It was an instantaneous hit and the poor fellow was besieged to sing it over and over again until he was nearly exhausted. Its spread through the region is a matter of local history.

The couple so signally honored on their wedding night were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Johnson who now live in Kulpmont near Mount Carmel. I spent part of an afternoon at their home in March, 1925, and found them full of reminiscences of their late uncle.

Johnson recalled that though Foley liked his drink, he still respected his Church and its priests. The late Father McMahan of Minersville was a particularly good friend of his and when he composed "Mining in the Barroom," Foley sent the priest a copy of his masterpiece. The good father, exhibiting a fine sense of humor, wrote him the following verse, which is in the measure and the spirit of Foley's ballad:

I read your verses o'er and o'er and I think they're simply
fine,
And with your kind permission I would like to add a line,

The man who wrote those verses might own a town or
mine—
If only he steered clear of the barroom.

I

The following is the variant obtained for me by B. I. Curran.

I'm a celebrated workingman, my duties I don't shirk;
I can cut more coal than any man from Pittsburgh to New
York;
It certainly is a terror, boys, how I get through my work,
When I'm seated in my glory in the barroom.

I can drive four yards of gangway, six or seven yards of
breast;
I can load my eighteen cars of coal, just while I take a rest:
But it's safer here than in the mines, and suits my purpose
best
To perform my manual labor in the barroom.

I can stand a set of timber, post and bar or single prop;
I can hitch up at the bottom or throw chain upon the top—
And give me a pair of engines, and, be jabers, I'll never stop
Till I shake up all the bottles in the barroom.

At rock work I'm a daisy, that's the stuff that I can ate;
I can drive the drill through sulphur balls, conglomerate or
hard slate;
And in using caps and dynamite—that's where I shine com-
plate;
I could fire all night and never hurt the barroom.

I can judge a shot of powder to the sixteenth of a grain;
I can tamp the hole and fire it if the water comes like rain:—
And if you want instructions how to work a perpendicular vein,
I can show you how to do it in the barroom.

Driving mules, it is my glory; just give me a balky team,
And I'll beat anything that ever went by water, wind, or steam:—
Your balance planes and endless chains are nowhere to be seen,
When I land my trip of wagons in the barroom.

I can work upon the platform, or work upon the dump;
I can put in pulleys on the slope, or I can clean the sump;
I can run a twenty-thousand horse power Worthington steam pump
With the kind of steam they furnish in the barroom.

So now you've heard my history and I hope you'll all agree
If you want a job put up in style, you'd better send for me:—
But I tell you I'm not worth a damn till I empty two or three
Of the heaviest loaded schooners in the barroom.

2

This variant was recited for me by George Sheibenhood, an Ashland miner, who had learned it in a saloon more than thirty years ago.

I'm a celebrated workingman, my duty I won't shirk,
I can cut more coal than any man from Pittsburgh to New York,
It's a holy, roaring terror, boys, how I get through my work—
That's while I'm at my glory in the barroom.

I can stand a double timber, single post, a bar or prop,
I can throw a chain on the bottom or I can throw it on the top,
Give me a pair of double engines and be damned I'll ne'er stop,
Till I land a couple of wagons in the barroom.

I'll go down and work on the platform or go out and run the dump,
I can put pulleys in on the slope or go down and clean the sump,
I can run a 20,000 horse-power steam engine pump—
That's providing that I have it in the barroom.

I'll go down and work the flat vein or go up and work the pitch,
I can work at the Potts[1] or Newside[1]—I don't care the divil which,
I can show the old track layer how to decorate the ditch—
Now haven't I often proved it in the barroom?

Now at driving I'm a daisy; just give me a balky team,
I'll beat anything that e'er went by water, wind, or steam;
There's your balance planes, your endless chains; they're nowhere to be seen,
Now haven't I often proved it in the barroom?

[1] Colleries near Ashland.

Now at bossing I'm a daisy; I know I'm no disgrace,
For I could raise your wages, boys, twelve cents at the l'ast,
Wasn't the Readin' Company mistaken when they didn't make all haste
And gobble me, before I struck the barroom?

I can show the boss or super how the air should circulate,
I can show the boss fireman how the steam should generate,
And the trouble at the Pottsville shaft I could eludicate,[2]
Now haven't I often proved it in the barroom?

And now my song is o'er and I haven't any other,
For heaven's sake don't fire no more or else we'll surely smother,
The landlord will rather throw us out than go to the bother
Of putting up a ventilator in the barroom.

And now my song is ended and I hope you'll all agree,
But if you want any pointers you'd better send for me,
But I'm not worth a good gol darn till I get twenty-three
Of the very biggest schooners in the barroom.

[2] Elucidate?

THE PRETTY MAID MILKING HER GOAT

This is a parody on "The Pretty Maid Milking Her Cow" with a mine village setting. It was made up in the '90s and its vogue was limited to Northumberland County. The Johnsons recalled it for me.

It was a cold winter's morning
As I went to work for my grub,
I heard a fair maid sing most charming
As she sat on the heel of a tub;
Her mouth was both large and commodious,
A small boy might skate down her throat;
Her bull-frog bass voice was melodious,
As she sat there milking her goat.

I stood and I gazed at this cr'ature,
I was smashed in two halves by surprise—
Thinks I she's some Goddess of Nature,
Or the queen of Georgetown [1] in disguise;
I says to her aisy and civil,
"Do you warble that poem by note"?
I was towld to inquire of the divil
By the pretty maid milking her goat.

Then I said, "Dearest fairy, have patience,
Till ye hear what I'm going to propose.
Come, leave all your wealthy relations,
And travel with me, primrose,

[1] A mine patch adjoining Wilkes-Barre.

Your every-day dress shall be silken—
And to show how much on you I dote,
I'll grab howlt of the tail while you're milking,
And help you to pump the ould goat."

She said, "Don't stand there givin' me taffy
Or think I'm a foolish galoot,
I know I could ne'er be happy
With you and your No. 9 boots,
You're nothin' but a common railroader;
I can tell by the mud on your coat,
And to none but a red-ash coal loader,
Will my papa give me and the goat."

A TRAMP THROUGH CARBON COUNTY

THIS ballad is a parody of "Patsy Grant Who Tramped Around the World" an old-time hit with a local touch. Joseph Gallagher of Lansford wrote the parody in 1888, drawing on his own experiences as an immigrant in the county. He sang it for the last time before an audience of miners in the Lansford Opera House in 1890, and I obtained it from him in July, 1925.

If you give me your attention, I will give it to you back,
When I tell you of my travels—well, that's all.
One day I took a notion for to come across the ocean,
Bid my friends good-bye and left old Donegal.
I arrived at Number Five, to Spring Tunnel made a dive;
I took in Summit Hill upon me furl,
From that to Number Six, got a reception there with bricks,
Sure I'm Patsy Grant that tramped around the world.

CHORUS

With a cigar up in me cheek, porous plaster on me feet,
I'm a dandy, I'm a pet among the girls,
While I'm traveling in disguise, sure I live on custard pies;
I'm Patsy Grant that tramped around the world.

I went up upon the breaker where the boys was picking slate,
The boss he told me that I stopped the screen;

I was dust up to me collar; be me sowl I thought I'd
smother,
And the boys said it was fallin' from the beam,
I'm sure that Twenty-two had asked me for a chew;
I towld him that I didn't have a grain,
Then I thought me time had come and I started into run,
It was the dust was gettin' loose above again.

I next arrived in Lansford and was walking down the street,
Says a young lad: "Look at the artificial dude"!
They pulled me by the coat and they struck the highest
note,
And perfumed me with some eggs that was no good.
Then a young lad shouted, "Crabbit, if you guess it you can
have it,"
They said everything about me that was mean,
They argued, they did, and scolded whether I was born or
molded,
Then agreed I was a walkin' slot machine.

I left that part entirely when I tramped it all around,
From that to sections down the line did hale,
I stopped at old Buck Mountain till I found I wasn't
wantin',
The next I struck was Dock Street in Coaldale.
I stumbled into Fisher's where the boys was drinkin' rum;
The greatest I have met upon my furl,
Then one spakes out so frisky, "Come Pat Grant, and have
your whiskey,
It will help you on your trip around the world."

I just received a parcel from a friend in Ireland,
In a little box a bit of blarney stone,

I got a front tooth pulled and thin I got the blarney stone
put in,
Sure it looks as well as if it was me own.
Now if there's any ladies here that would like to make the
boast,
That they kissed the blarney stone; just raise your hand,
Fall in line, come up this aisle; I'll be waitin' with a smile,
And I'll give you all the assistance that I can.

JAKE AND JACK ARE MINERS

THIS is one of three ballads from the copy-book of John Hory, of Ashland, their author.[1]

Jake and Jack are miners,
Their breast is No. 6,
It's naught but rock and sulphur ball—
I think they're in a fix.

Jake and Jack are miners,
The men do laugh and shout;
Everytime they fire a shot,
It blows the tamping out.

Jake and Jack are miners,
Good people do not grin,
Sometimes they blame the powder,
Or forget to put some in.

Jake and Jack are miners,
No coal they'll ever give,
The place where they are working in,
Will do them while they live.

Jake and Jack are miners,
Now say they'll go on a tramp,
They do not like the fireboss,
And curse the safety lamp.

Jake and Jack are miners,
And do their very best,
But they were born tired,
So they often want a rest.

[1] See page 169.

THE BROKEN SHOVEL

"THE BROKEN SHOVEL" came to me in August, 1925, though I had heard of it two months before. One day about the middle of June, I was scenting through Carbondale for material when I met a retired saloon keeper who admitted knowing it. But he refused to sing or recite it for me. It seems that a few days before I came, he had given a ballad to a friend of his on the latter's promise of a bottle of Three-Star Hennessy. His friend defaulted after hearing the piece and so I had to suffer for the other's sin, which is one of the little ironies of life.

"The Broken Shovel" was written by Dennis Brady, a 25-year old miner living in Beaver Brook, a mine patch about four miles from Hazleton. Daniel Brennan of McAdoo, my informant, placed the year of authorship as 1890 or thereabouts. Brady had a local reputation as a singer and comedian and was much in demand at village christenings, weddings, and raffles. He is believed to be still alive.

The names mentioned in the ballad are of characters then living in Beaver Brook. Pretta-Moor which is Gaelic for big potato, was a nickname given a huckster who was a village character. Hav-

ing been crippled in youth he was unable because of his impediment to work in the mines. So he sold potatoes. As he walked along the village streets, his horse and wagon trailing him, he shouted in a resounding voice, "pretta-moor" until the natives came to associate these words with him.

THE BROKEN SHOVEL

Good Christians all, come lend an ear,
Unto me ditty, and the truth you'll hear;
It's of Barney Gallagher so bold and thrue,
Arrah that broke me shovel,
Arrah that broke me shovel,
That broke me fine new shovel in two.

When the whistle blew and the shovel was broke,
Old Neddy Kearn was the first man spoke,
Saying, "Barney Gallagher, come tell me thrue,
Phat for you broke me shovel,
Phat for you broke me shovel,
Phat for you broke me brand new shovel in two"?

"Oh," said Barney Gallagher in a stuttering way,
"I'll c-c-crack your jaw if I hang this day,
To ins-s-sult a man so b-b-bold and thrue,
About your b-b-bloody shovel,
About your b-b-bloody shovel,
That was broke in two."

Barney and McGlynn, they both pitch in,
Like Corbett and Mitchell they form a ring;

The crowd around began to roar
Phan who the divil entered,
Phan who the divil entered,
But the Pretta-Moor.

"Howlt on," sez the Pretta, "we must have fair play.
"He's a Ross's man and will win the day;
But if you touch him then I'll touch you."
That was all about the shovel,
That was all about the shovel,
That was broke in two.

OVER AT INDIAN RIDGE

INDIAN RIDGE colliery is located in Shenandoah and is one of the oldest in the eastern middle field. In the '80s and '90s and up to the strike of 1902, Jim Foley, seemingly an interesting character, was one of its petty bosses. Harry Tempest [1] makes him the central figure in this ballad which he calls "Over at Indian Ridge." Miners who worked under Foley tell some engaging stories about him. The following is one:

One day the inside foreman had escorted a party of New Yorkers through the Indian Ridge mine and on coming back to the surface the men and women were introduced to Jim Foley. One of the men, a corpulent, prosperous-looking Babbitt, said, as he shook hands: "I've just been through the mine, Mr. Foley, and believe me, I wouldn't work down there for a million dollars a month."

Foley, still gripping the stranger's hand, bent over as if to whisper into his ear and yelled, "Faith, there's men a-workin' here phat's getting less than that."

Harry Tempest, in sending me a copy of the ballad from his home in Corydon, Ind., in a letter dated October 13, 1925, writes the following explanatory note: "I wrote the song while I was employed at the

[1] See page 152.

mine as repairman about the year 1902. It was much in demand at the time and the boys enjoyed its character . . . which brought many laughs."

This ballad has no refrain or chorus, a piano vamp separating the stanzas.

OVER AT INDIAN RIDGE

Now if you'll listen I'll tell you in a bit of a song,
What's over at Indian Ridge.
I'll tell ye, me boys, and it won't take me long,
What's over at Indian Ridge.
From the top of the shaft with a rope we're let down—
Yes, many a hundred feet under the ground,
And its there most any kind of a man can be found—
Over at Indian Ridge.

They have carpenters and plasterers and stone masons galore,
Over at Indian Ridge.
They have actors and lawyers and ex-policemen you know,
Over at Indian Ridge.
The boss came one morning and said to the stone mason:
"You'll try to build me a hospital one story high,"
"I'll do," said John, with a wink of the eye—
Over at Indian Ridge.

Now to build this hospital was all of the rage,
Over at Indian Ridge.
We had all kinds of mechanics to go down on the cage,
Over at Indian Ridge.

Jim Dougherty, the steam fitter, said he would do all he could,
While the fireboss, old Foley, was chewing a big tobacco cud,
Old Matthews was building the wall and calling for mud,
Over at Indian Ridge.

Now I must tell you, me boys, of a great race,
Over at Indian Ridge.
And if ye listen, I'll tell ye how it took place,
Over at Indian Ridge.
It was the time of the strike when the Hunks they were out,
Boyd, Mitchell and Foley were coming the route,
When a clout of a stone knocked old Foley out—
Over at Indian Ridge.

III

ON BEING A MINER

PATRICK J. "GIANT" O'NEILL

PATRICK J. "GIANT" O'NEILL was the first of the two miner-minstrels whose talent as entertainers carried them from the mines to the professional stage. Early in his career he earned the nickname "Giant" because he stood head and shoulders above all jig dancers in the region, yet in stature he was hardly more than a pygmy. For a generation or more following the end of the Civil War, jig and reel dancing matches were the rage; every patch boasted of a "best" dancer and the favorites were matched at sectional and regional contests until a champion emerged. This champion loomed as high as the Himalayas in the hard coal fields; and if in addition to his graceful stepping he was able to create a ballad and sing it himself in a way that brought a tear to the eye or drew a laugh, then the kingdom of a Croesus was none too high a prize for him in the estimation of his fellow miners.

Such was the position enjoyed by "Giant" O'Neill in 1878 when the miners lost him to the circus of Welsh & Sands; he toured the country with them in a singing and dancing act until 1883 when O'Brien's "Erin" got him. The following year found him with Howerth's "Hibernica" and it is as one of the two

"Dublin Dans" in this show that his fame rests with the older generation of Irish in the country. The original Dublin Dan was John F. Burke who was brought over from Ireland some years before the Civil War by Heming Brothers and traveled with the troupe for many years; he took to drink and died penniless at Phoenixville, Pa.

For the Irish miners of the hard coal fields there was no show quite like Howerth's "Hibernica" and the stir it excited has its modern analogy in the ballyhoo that accompanies a Barnum & Bailey's circus. Its coming to a local "Grand Opera House"—every one-horse town boasted of one in those days—was the signal for the gathering of the clans from mine patches for miles around. Usually a street parade was staged six or seven hours before the rising of the curtain; this consisted principally of two-wheeled jaunting carts hitched to donkeys, such as might be found on any road in County Mayo or Kilkenny, with the driver rigged out in colored breeches and buckles with top hat to match, as men were dressed back in the old country; two or three bag pipers playing sentimental melodies added the final touch to the picturesqueness of the spectacle.

The show itself was a precursor of the modern vaudeville and moving picture program. The troupe carried hundreds of stereopticon slides showing scenes in Ireland which were projected on a curtain by a magic lantern. Some of the pictures were livened by an appropriate, sentimental ballad sung

by a member of the troupe. Old miners recall with reveried delight the memory of Annie Irish, Burke's wife, who often sang for them "Killarney Lakes," "The Vale of Avoca," and similar pieces that made their homesick hearts yearn for a sight of the "ould sod." And when the last sigh had faded and the tear drop had been dried from the eye, the tallow candles were lighted again and headlong on the stage rushed the two Dublin Dans who, with mimicry and joke-telling, drew gales of laughter; while the gallery gods guffawed and aimed peanut shells at the swells in the pit.

"Hibernica" ran on the rocks somewhere in the hard coal fields in 1894 and the little Giant went back to Schuylkill County, the scene of his early triumphs, bidding adieu to the professional stage. The miners welcomed him back with open arms and clamored as ever to see his little feet perform their marvelous tricks. He found that the two ballads which he had composed before leaving the region in 1878—namely, "The Hard Working Miner" and "The Stranger at the Scoop" were still in vogue, and so, frequently he was called upon to sing them himself.

He took up his former trade of tool sharpener and found employment at the Turkey Run, the Mid-Valley and other collieries. In 1922 he abandoned the coal region as a home and removed to Atlantic City. Here in the back room of a chop house I met him, once on a Sunday in April and a second time

in May when he introduced Harry Tempest to me and gave me his ballads.

On my first visit he danced a jig and sang for me the two ballads that I have here, as customers standing near-by looked on in admiration and wonder. Though 62, he seemed not to have a gray hair in his head; there were few wrinkles in his face and his Irish blue eyes beamed like a schoolboy's.

During spring and summer, O'Neill danced and sang in the better eating places; and in the winter he worked as a blacksmith.

A STRANGER AT THE SCOOP

Air: "The Man at the Top Does All the Work."

I came to this country a stranger unknown,
I hadn't any friends to give me a home;
My pockets were empty, I hadn't a stamp,
So I thought I would work, boys, before I would tramp,
I went to the boss, he had a lamp in his hand,
He said: "I'll engage you, you're a strong looking man,"
I said, "My good boss, I want none of your taffy,
You can give me a job but you mustn't laugh at me."

CHORUS

I work for the company and Franklin B. Gowen,
From the top of the shaft with a rope I'm let down,
I travel in the gangway to the face of me work;
I'm surrounded by danger in the bowels of the earth.

The first thing you'll do, boys, you'll pick up your drill,
You will then sound the top and your car you can fill,
If the top it is bad, drill in a long hole,
Give it powder and tampin' and blow lots of coal;
You will then break the lumps, throw them into the car—
Wipe the sweat off your face—I tell you it is hard.
When your legs you must bend and your back you must
stoop,
You will curse the first man who invented the scoop.

There's one thing I'll tell you and don't you forget,
That your back with the droppers is all wringing wet,
Your clothes they're soaking; your shoes are wet through,
Oh! never be a miner whatever you do.
The man who is outside his life it is safe,
If an accident happens he has time to escape,
But the poor weary miner that works underground,
If the top it should fall he would never be found.

I wish that the company would give us a chance,
Our hours they would shorten and wages advance,
I ne'er would grumble for that would suit me;
And I'm sure with that same all the rest would agree.
On three days a week, boys, our living we make,
And we work like mules for the bit that we eat;
But now we have a union let them say what they may:
We will strike for more wages than a dollar a day.

He added the following stanza during the 1902 strike:

We can boast of our leader, a man of great fame,
He is loyal to the cause, John Mitchell is his name;

He will never betray us, for gold he don't care,
He's a man God made to be honest and fair.
There's three more I'll mention; their names are well known,
John Fahey, John Siney and our beloved Mother Jones,
They built up our union and it's here now to stay,
And we'll strike for more wages than a dollar a day.

THE HARD WORKING MINER

Air: "I'm a Man You Don't Meet Every Day."

I'm a hard working man, you can see by my hands,
Although I am friendly and free.
A dollar a day is a very small pay
For a man with a large family.
I didn't come here, boys, to boast or to brag,
But just for to tell you my troubles,
I work day and night and the world I must fight
And load coal with my pick and my shovel.

CHORUS

I work in the mines where the sun never shines
Nor daylight does ever appear;
With me lamp blazing red on the top of my head,
And in danger I never know fear.

Just think of the poor man who works in the mines
With the mules and the rats underground;
Where the smoke is so thick you can cut it with a stick,
And can weigh it on scales by the pound.
My face it is black from the dust of the coal,
Though my heart it is open and free;
I would share my last loaf with the man that's in want,
Though I earn it hard you can see.

Now, my kind friends, I will bid you good-bye;
I cannot stay here any longer,
I'll pick up my pack, throw it o'er my back,
And I think I will make my road shorter,

I have a wife and small family at home in the house,
And to meet me I'm sure they'll be glad,
They will stand at the door when I'm on my way home,
And they'll say to their mama, "here's dad."

JOHN J. CURTIS

IT was in May, 1888, long before the Pennsylvania Workmen's Compensation Act was enacted, that John J. Curtis was blinded while at work in the Morea colliery in Schuylkill County. Reduced to beggary, he appealed to a friend to find someone who could put his experience into ballad form to serve as his introduction among strange miners. Joseph Gallagher of Lansford was approached and in a few hours the ballad was ready. Soon broadsides were printed by the Lansford "Record" and Curtis, led by a Scranton boy, roamed the region reciting the ballad and selling the broadsides. Wherever miners gathered—in saloons, cigar shops, hose houses and at one social function or another—there might be found Curtis and his youthful guide. To the everlasting honor of the miners of that day it must be recorded that their response was quick and generous not only to this particular appeal but to the appeals of all of their fellows whom the anthracite coal industry had thrown upon their charity. And the only compensation that Joseph Gallagher received for his composition was the thought that he had done an act of kindness to a fellow man.

He recited the ballad for me one evening in July, 1925.

JOHN J. CURTIS

My name is John J. Curtis,
  My age is twenty-eight,
I was born in Schuylkill County
  And there I met my fate.
So now with your attention
  If you will be so kind,
I will tell you of that fatal day
  That I was stricken blind.

It was on a bright May morning,
  As the sun peeped o'er the hill,
The little birds sang loud and sweet:
  I seem to hear them still;
My heart was filled with purest joy
  As to the mines I did stray,
To earn an honest living
  In the colliery of Morea.[1]

At eight o'clock I climbed the pitch,
  And to my work did go,
I drilled two holes and loaded them—
  Touched one and fled below.
It soon went off; I then went back
  To the one that did remain,
When by its mouth it too went off
  And blew me down again.

I lay there in the darkness;
  I was buried in the coal,

[1] At that time the emphasis was on the "a" with the "e" silent.

The blood in streams ran down my cheeks;
Great lumps o'er me did roll.
When I got free, my cap and lamp
Was all that I could find,
And when I struck a match,
'Twas then I knew that I was blind.

Now kind folks, do have pity
On whom you chance to find
Wandering through your city,
That in both eyes is blind;
You know not when your day will come
That this same path you'll stray,
So be kind-hearted while you can
To the miner from Morea.

THE OLD MINER'S REFRAIN

"THE OLD MINER'S REFRAIN" is one of the oldest ballads in this collection, but I have been unable to learn the year of its composition nor to trace the identity of the author. That it was sung as early as the '70s and was widely popular into the '90s I have the word of several veteran miners in different parts of the region.

Some old miners in Lansford told me in July, 1925, that the name of the ballad was "The Miner's Life" and believed that Jack Johnson had written it. When I called at the home of his son, John J. Johnson, Jr., at Drifton some weeks later I found a manuscript entitled "The Miner's Life." But aside from the fact that they were similar in subject and were sung to the same air—namely, "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane," they were plainly the products of two men; and if another point were needed to clinch the argument there is the fact that the Johnson piece was written in 1884 when "The Old Miner's Refrain" was already familiar.

Both ballads have the elements that make for popularity among men who earn their living at mining, for they are like crystal pools of water that reflect the life of the miner—his dreams, his hopes, his thwarted ambitions and the fear of a dependent

old age which forever haunts him. "Once a miner and twice a breaker boy" is still a common saying in the hard coal fields, for when a miner has become too worn out to be any longer useful underground, he is often pensioned with a job in the coal breaker where he drags out his weary years picking slate along side boys.

I

Obtained for me by B. I. Curran of Centralia, Columbia County.

I'm getting old and feeble and I can work no more;
I have laid the rusty mining tools away—
For forty years and over I have toiled about the mines,
But now I'm getting feeble, old and gray.
I started in the breaker and went back to it again,
But now my work is finished for all time;
The only place that's left me is the almshouse for a home,
That's where I'll lay this weary head of mine.

CHORUS

Where are the boys that worked with me in the breaker long ago?
There are many of them now have gone to rest;
Their cares of life are over and they've left this world of woe;
And their spirits now are roaming with the bless'd.

In the chutes I graduated instead of going to school—
Remember, friends, my parents they were poor;

When a boy left the cradle it was always made the rule
To try to keep starvation from the door.
At eight years of age to the breaker first I went,
To learn the occupation of a slave;
I was certainly delighted, and on picking slate was bent—
My ambition it was noble, strong and brave.

At eleven years of age I bought myself a lamp—
The boss he sent me down the mine to trap;
I stood in there in water, in powder smoke and damp:
My leisure hours I spent in killing rats.
One day I got promoted to what they call a patch,
Or a lackey for the man that drives the team:
I carried sprags and spreaders and had to fix the latch—
I was going through my exercise, it seems.

I next became a driver, and thought myself a man;
The boss he raised my pay as I advanced:
In going through the gangway with the mules at my command,
I was prouder than the President of France.
But now my pride is weakened and I am weakened too;
I tremble till I'm scarcely fit to stand:
If I were taught book learning instead of driving teams,
To-day, kind friends, I'd be a richer man.

I next became a miner and laborer combined,
For to earn my daily bread beneath the ground.
I performed the acts of labor which came in a miner's line—
For to get my cars and load them I was bound.
But now I can work no more, my cares of life are run;
I am waiting for the signal at the door;

When the angels they will whisper, "Dear old miner, you must come,
And we'll row you to the bright celestial shore."

2

Recited for me by Joseph Gallagher, Lansford.

I'm getting old and feeble and I cannot work no more,
I've laid my rusty mining tools away;
For forty years and over I've toiled about the mines,
But now I'm getting feeble, old and gray,
At eight years of age, my boys, to the breaker first I went
To learn the occupation of a slave;
Our troubles they were many, but I had to be content,
To avoid the pathway leading to the grave.

CHORUS

Where's the boys that worked with me in the breaker long ago?
Many of them's dead and gone to rest,
Their care of life is over; they have left this world of woe,
Their spirits now is roaming with the bless'd.

At eleven years of age, my boys, I bought myself a lamp,
The boss he sent me down the slope to tramp,
Through water and through powder smoke and always in the damp;
I spent my leisure hours at killing rats.
Then I got promoted to what they call a patch;
That's a lackey for a man that drives a team,
I carried sprags and stretchers and oft times set the latch
While going through my exercise I'd sing.

Next I became a driver and thought myself a man,
The boss he raised my pay as I advanced.
While going in the gangway with a team at my command
I was as happy as the President of France;
Next I became a loader and my chest began to swell:
I was going up and yet was going down,
I climbed that famous ladder as we often used to tell,
Through our ignorance of the dangers underground.

Next I became a miner and up the pitch I went
To earn my daily bread beneath the ground;
I put my length on every day while driving up my breast
To get my cars and load them I was bound.
But now I am old and feeble and I cannot work no more,
I'm waiting for the signal at the door.
I hear the angels whispering: "Old miner, you must come,
And we'll row you to that far off distant shore."

3

P. F. Delaney, 31 South Oak Street, Mount Carmel, Pa., a former miner, also sent me a copy of this ballad.

THE MINER'S LIFE[1]

I am a poor old miner, my race of life is nearly run,
Like many of my comrades my mining days are done.
My strength you see is failing me, old age is coming fast;
The only thing that is left for me is a picture of the past.

When I went to the breaker first I was very young,
My mother was left with a family and I the only son;

[1] See pages 11 and 82.

My father he was taken, I hope his soul's at rest—
He was crushed to death by a fall of coal while working in his breast.

If father had been spared to us, as you may understand,
I might have had education and been to-day a different man.
Like many other mining boys, my parents they were poor;
I was compelled to go to work to keep hunger from the door.

When I left the breaker I went down the slope,
To become a miner it was my brightest hope.
First, tending door was all I had to do:
Open it and shut it when the drivers they passed through.

The boss came to me one day and said, "My little man,
I'm going to promote you, I'll put you blowing fan,
Away in the gangway where they are driving the airway,
And if you do your duty I'll advance your pay."

I next became a patcher, from that to driving mules—
I was graduating here instead of in the school.
Then became a laborer, the coal car for to fill.
Then became a miner boy to use the pick and drill.

You can talk about the railroaders, the danger they go through,
Warriors and sailor boys, I know it's very true.
They have good air to work in, for the roof they have the sky:
There's no one braves the danger like the poor miner boy.

They have bad air to work in, shattered pillars and bad top,
They don't know the moment when a fall on them might drop,
A little lamp to show them light—that is their brightest hope,
See the danger they go through coming up a shaft or slope.

When a miner is at work in a gangway or a breast,
His mind is never easy if he sits down to rest,
For fear some careless comrade the gas he might ignite
And cause a great explosion, and then you would see a sight.

There are other dangers poor miners often dread:
Water in abandoned slopes, perhaps not far ahead.
There are instances where they struck it they hadn't time to fly,
Brought death and destruction to the poor miner boy.

Way down in the coal mines, in the bowels of the earth below,
Where the sun it never shines or gentle wind does blow;
If you went there it would make you stare and fill your heart with dread,
To see the dangers they go through to earn their daily bread.

Little I thought when I grew old and mining could do no more,
I'd go back to the breaker where I spent my days before.
This world is full of trouble, hardship, care and strife,
It's twice a boy and once a man, is a poor miner's life.

A MINER'S EPITAPH

I HAVE always felt that the best time to visit a graveyard for its sombre atmosphere was in the black of night or at dawn. Certainly never during the day unless, of course, the dark-hued wagon brings you there on your last earthly ride. Daylight destroys the illusion of mystery and infinite space.

Accordingly, it was during that witching hour that divides night from day that I made my way through St. Gabriel's cemetery, Hazleton, one August morning.

I came for a treasure, and a sketch drawn by a friend brought me to its exact location in the old graveyard.

I found a plot enclosed by a rectangular iron fence. In a corner stood a granite shaft about five feet in height. On one side appeared the following inscription, headed by a cross: "Sacred to the memory of Condy Brislin. Died June 19, 1880, Aged 67. R. I. P. Presented by his sons, Neil and Charles Brislin."

But what had drawn me to this old graveyard at such an unearthly hour was the following Spoon River-like epitaph cut in letters so small that I had to come closely to read it:

"Fourty years I worked with pick & drill
Down in the mines against my will
The Coal Kings slave but now it's passed
Thanks be to God I am free at last."

Surmounting it was a small circle bearing a crossed pick, shovel, drill and "needle," emblematical of the miner's calling.

The plot was overrun with wild growth through which a lone buttercup reared its shy little head. I stood pondering the scene, and as I did so, the mood of Milton's "Il Penseroso" crept over me, while Gray's deathless Elegy came to mind. Crickets chirped and leaves swished disturbing an otherwise still moment. The sky overhead appeared leaden while an early morning haze hung low. When my eyes caught the great ball rising in the East, I turned my footsteps back to the gate.

I was stirred by the experience. The epitaph threw back a challenge which made me determined to find descendants of Condy Brislin so that I might learn more of him. Yet it was quite by accident that I ran into some of his grandchildren in Wilmington, Del., about a week later. I had gone there for a ballad.

They told me that Condy Brislin was one of the first miners in the anthracite coal region. Immigrating from Ireland, he entered Pottsville in 1840 not exactly in a coach-and-four but in a respectable cart. Several years later saw him working in Hazleton where for many years he bore the title of "The

Pottsville Miner." Three children survived when he died of miner's asthma. They were Neil and Charles and one daughter, Anne who was married to Frank Carbon of that section. The Carbons were grandparents of Con Carbon, the bard and minstrel who figures prominently in these pages. A two-year old son of Neil and his wife, Sarah, lies buried in the same plot as Condy Brislin. Mrs. Sarah Brislin, the mother of my informants, still lives, but was too ill to see me at the time of my visit.

The epitaph was the creation of Charles, an uncle of the Wilmington Brislins. He had been working in the Colorado coal fields when he was told of his father's death, and so he came East. He ordered the monument and then pondered hard over what he should put on it as he wanted something that his father might have chosen. Then came this pithy, arresting epitaph. Old Condy Brislin himself could not have done any better.

Some time after the funeral, Charles went back to his home in Colorado and was never again heard of among his relatives in the East.

THE MINER'S DOOM

SUNG to the air of "Adieu to dear Cambria"! (Yn Iach i ti Gymru Llandovery.) This is an old Welsh ballad recited to me by Thomas Jones of Seek, Schuylkill County, who had brought it with him from his old home in South Wales.

At five in the morning as jovial as any,
The miner doth rise to his work for to go,
He caresses his wife and his children so dearly
And bids them adieu before closing the door;
He goes down the deep shaft at the speed of an arrow,
His heart light and gay without fear or dread,
He's no thought of descending to danger and peril—
That his life is depending on one single thread.

His wife is his queen and his home is his palace,
His children his glory, to maintain them he tries,
He'll work like a hero; he faces all danger,
He'll deprive his own self their bare feet to hide.
Now his day's work is o'er, he's homeward returning,
He thinks not how the change in an hour will be,
But he thinks how his wife and his children will greet him—
But his home and his children he'll nevermore see.

Now his wife had been dreaming of her husband so dearly,
She had seen him in danger—"God help me," she cried;

Too true was the dream of the poor woman's sorrow:
The rope broke ascending; her dear husband died.
Their home that morning was as jovial as any,
But a dark cloud came rolling straight o'er their door—
A widow, three children are left for to mourn him.
The one that they ne'er will see any more.

At the day of his funeral the great crowds had gathered,
He was loved by his friends, by his neighbors, by all,
To the grave went his corpse, by his friends it was followed,
The tears from our eyes like the rain they did fall,
And the widow, lamenting the fate of her husband,
Broken-hearted she died on the dear loved one's tomb,
To the world now is left their three little children
Whose father had met with a coal miner's doom.

THE MINERS' SONG

THESE two pieces were copied from a thin volume entitled "Trevaro and other poems" by "Alpha Lyra" which was printed in Pottsville in 1853. The nom de plume is that of Theodore Daddow who was a manufacturer of squibs in St. Clair and wrote poetry as an avocation.

I

We dig by day and we dig by night,
For the iron ore and the Anthracite—
For the ore so gray, and the coal so bright;
Sing ho, for the ore and the anthracite!

To David Percy Brown, Esq., of Pottsville.

The sailor's life has its round of charms,
The storm and chase with their wild alarms;
And he sings as the boatswain pipes to arms,
"Ho! Ho! for the sea with its mystic charms."

The soldier fights for a scanty hire,
Yet pants for the strife and the battle's fire;
As he to the ramparts' heights aspires
Sings—"ho! for the strife and the battle's fire"!

The farmer treads o'er his furrowed land,
And scatters seed with his careful hand,
And sings as he twists his shining hands,
"Ho! Ho! for hearty harvest hands."

The miner pants for no gory goal;
In vain to him may the battle roll;
Yet his manly heart and his fearless soul
Sing—"ho! success to the gleaming coal."

We dig by day and we dig by night
For the iron ore and the Anthracite—
For the ore so gray, and the coal so bright;
Sing ho! for the ore and the Anthracite.

2

THE MINER'S SONG

Before the miner pierced the field,
The soldier had no sword to wield;
To sailors Neptune would not yield,
Old ocean like a parchment sealed;

Then ho, for miners! Hey for miners!
They who foremost pierced the field—
They that made old Neptune yield;
Sing ho! for miners, ho!

Then Yankees could not beat the world,
Our thunder on no foes was hurled;
Our stars and stripes, so proudly curled,
Above no waters were unfurled:
Then ho, for miners! Hey for miners!
They that have our thunder hurled—
They that have our flag unfurled;
Sing ho! for miners, ho!

The rail-car had not kept the rail,
Nor steamship sped without a sail;
The lightnings had not told their tale
From northern hill to southern vale:
Then ho, for miners! Hey for miners!
They who laid the shining rail—
They who fiery lightnings hail;
Sing ho! for miners, ho!

Then Mars' trumpet had no tongue,
Nor Vulcan's iron anvils rung,
Apollo's harp was all unstrung;
And science's banners still unhung:
Then ho, for miners! Hey for miners!
For them let Vulcan's anvils ring—
For them let all the muses sing,
Sing ho! for miners, ho!

THE MINER LAD

THIS piece is taken from "a general geological, historical, and statistical review [1] edited by Eli Bowen" which was published in Pottsville in 1848.

Nay, don't despise the miner lad,
  Who burrows like the mole;
Buried alive, from morn to night,
  To delve for household coal—
Nay, miner lad ne'er blush for it,
  Though black thy face be as the pit!

As honorable thy calling is
  As that of hero lords;
They owe to the poor miner lad
  The ore that steels their swords—
And perils too, as fierce as theirs
  In limb and life, the miner shares!

Ye gayest of the gaudy world,
  In gold and silver bright,
Who but the humble miner lad,
  Your jewels brought to light?
Where would be your gold and silver,
  But for yonder delver?

[1] Of the coal industry.

Ye brows of pearly diadems,
  Who sit on lofty thrones,
Smile gently on the miner lad
  Who wrought your precious stones,
And rescued from their iron bond
  The ruby and the diamond!

Ye instruments of brass that pierce
  The ear with trumpet sound,
Your notes, but for the miner lad,
  Had slumbered underground—
Nor imaged bronze, nor brazen gate,
  Had graced the trophies of the great!

Then don't refuse the miner lad
  The crust of bread—his prayer!
Beneath that blackest face of his
  He hides a heart as fair!
The toil of his bare brawny arms
  All, all our hearts and houses warm!

THE OLD D. & H. GRAVITY

THIS ballad describes the Delaware & Hudson gravity railroad which for many years carried Lackawanna Valley coal to the head of the D. & H. canal at Honesdale, Wayne County. The empty cars were brought back to the mines by steam on another track. In the pioneer days of the anthracite coal mining industry there were a number of these gravity roads which served to overcome the natural barriers set up by the mountains.

I. W. Osborne, a carpenter at the Powderly breaker of the Hudson Coal Company in South Carbondale, who had worked on the gravity in his youth, lent me a yellowed newspaper clipping which contained the following piece. He believed it was printed in the Carbondale Leader in 1902.

"Verses written to commemorate the doings of the men who gave loyal service to their employees when the old system of handling coal was popular and profitable."

By John McComb.

The blowing of the whistles at the breaking of the day
Was the harbinger of labor and the certainty of pay;

There was music in the atmosphere when wheels began to hum;
And a rhythmic sort of cadence in the rolling of the drum.

As long as coal was coming and the engines were in trim,
The boys would keep cars moving till the shades of night were dim;
And then they'd fix up torches, if a break had caused delay,
And work far in the gloaming to assist the trains away.

From twenty-eight to Number Nine 'twas up the hill they'd go,
And then descend the Moosic to the level far below;
By gravity to Honesdale, from old Waymart they would run,
And take all kinds of weather till another day was done.

Along the line from Foot of G the "loads" would travel east
Until they reached the old canal where boating now has ceased;
But in the good old summer time, for more than sixty years,
The docks and boats were always manned by scrapping volunteers.

The "lights" came back another track by steam and fans and grade,
And there were men to handle them who never seemed dismayed;
For they could handle slings and sprags or set a brake for fair,
And get a train from plane to plane while things were in repair.

Those good old times, when good old chimes were thrown
from engine steam,
Have passed away; but day by day they haunt us like a
dream;
For since the year of ninety-eight, when the old road ceased
to be,
The romance of a railroad man has less variety.

For the Shepherd's crook and the Horseshoe curve, the spur
and pinion wheels,
The old sheave-pit and the balance-box, and the drum with
its forty reels,
The cone and sling, the compound brake, and the twist that
ground the rope,
Are all in the minds of the old-time men who received a
snub to their hope.

Now ponds are lakes with fancy names, and strangers come
and go
To see the sights from Farview heights, and the fields of
Wayne below,
The trains roll by with heavy cars in a modern sort of way,
While the gravity men may show their scars and celebrate
the day.

IV

THE COLLIER BOYS

THE BREAKER BOY

A BOY must be at least sixteen years old to be permitted to work in a coal breaker to-day and eighteen, underground. But before the Act of 1885 was passed setting the minimum age limit for working in a mine at twelve years (it was conspicuously silent as to a breaker) there were no legal restrictions at all. And so we find lads as young as 7 or 8 picking slate in the dingy buildings. They were so tender that their mothers frequently took them to and from their place of employment.

A touching story is told of a widow who came for her son, nicknamed Mickey Pick-Slate, one evening in the '80s and found that he had been crushed between the huge steel rolls; the breaker was at Audenried, near Hazleton. The shock affected her mind, and every day for the next several weeks she came to the breaker to take home her boy. Her eyes would wander pathetically over the smutty faces that passed by. She would wait until the last of the lads had gone, then shake her head despairingly and drag her way back home. A ballad celebrated this episode but I have been able to find only the following stanza which possibly was the chorus:

> Mickey Pick-Slate, early and late,
> That was this poor little breaker boy's fate;

A poor simple woman at the breaker still waits
To take home her Mickey Pick-Slate.

They sat astride their chutes on crude, wooden benches. Usually a leg was raised, the slate and other refuse being picked from under it. Their backs ached continually and their eyes smarted from being pinned for hours at a time on the cataracts of gleaming coal. But the worst torture, perhaps, came from their fingers being cut by coal and slate; and before they were hardened the sulphur water which washed the coal ate holes into them. Frequently their ears became blocked which necessitated a visit to a doctor to remove the coal dust. Before water came into general use in coal preparation, breakers were full of dust—so thick was it in some that boys sitting only two feet apart could not see one another. They wore handkerchiefs over their mouths to keep it out, yet many had to take to tobacco chewing to keep from choking.[1]

Over those little galley slaves loomed the terrible chute boss who was relied upon to put the fear of the devil into their hearts. With stick, switch, or gun-belt in hand, he would strut up and down the breaker and woe betide that scalawag whose fingers

[1] Coal is separated from impurities by the "jig," a machine introduced early in this century which works on the principle of specific gravity. The flotation method is beginning to supplant the jig; the coal and refuse pass into huge cones filled with surging water and sand, the coal floating over the top and refuse such as slate and "bony," being heavier, sinking to the bottom to be conveyed to a dump in the colliery yard.

lacked the required nimbleness or whose eyes failed even once to distinguish between what was anthracite and what was known as "bony"—half coal, half slate —which lacked the lustre of the genuine thing.

The breaker was reeky during the summer but this discomfort was trifling compared with the suffering that winter brought. A stove stood at the top, but owing to its peculiar, sprawling construction, the breaker was only partially heated by it. And down below the boys shivered to the marrow as they picked their slate and bony with numbed fingers. However, the chute boss relented sufficiently to permit a thawing out at the stove, sending the boys up there in groups. It was while sprawling around the stove with the boss safely out of hearing distance that they improvised ballads about him and his fellow bosses as a means of relieving the heart of its burden of bitterness. Sometimes these crude pieces were taken to the shanty on the side of the hill where the boys, gathered around a smelly, sputtering miner's lamp sang them with the proper shading of humor, sarcasm, or contempt. Under such circumstances were born many breaker ballads in all parts of the region which might have been preserved had there been some way of recording them. However, while touring through the Mahanoy Valley during the summer of 1925, I was able to pick up two stanzas with a refrain of such a ballad which had had its origin in the Bast breaker at Ashland, Schuylkill County.

Here they are:

The first comes big Sam with his big leather boots.
He goes down in the breaker and looks down the chutes,
If he sees a cocko[2] he'll cry:
"Go down to the shipper and tell a damn lie."[3]
AND ITS HARD TIMES WHEREVER YOU GO.

Then comes George Shade with a shovel and pick,
He'll go into the drift and sit on a stick,
And if anything ain't right,
He's bound to go out and have a big fight.
AND ITS HARD TIMES WHEREVER YOU GO.

[2] A piece of slate or bony.

[3] The shipper, who was out in the colliery yard, examined the prepared coal before it was permitted to go to market.

THE DOOR BOY'S LAST GOOD-BYE

FROM the breaker the steps that led to a contract miner's chamber were: door-tending, mule-driving, and service as a miner's laborer. The door boy sat for ten hours at his dungeon-like post in the gangway, opening and closing a ventilation door for passing trips of cars.[1] His work involved little physical exertion. But darkness, coupled with loneliness and the eery silence of a coal mine, often oppressed his mind, making him serious far beyond his years. However, it instilled in him a sense of responsibility and brought out that quality of courage without which existence in an anthracite coal mine is impossible. When the roof "worked" in the gangway—the portent of an impending cave-in—it fell to the doorboy to risk his life spreading the alarm among the miners in his section. The industry's roll of honor contains the names of more than one of these lads who, by unselfish acts performed in the line of duty, have earned the right to be rated as heroes.

The words of this ballad were written by Vint. L. Breese and the music by Griffith J. Jones, in 1902. William E. Jones, a miner of Williamstown, Dauphin County, who writes that he has sung the ballad hun-

[1] Automatic doors are being installed in many mines, and they are gradually elbowing the door boy out of his job.

dreds of times in Schuylkill and Dauphin Counties has sent me the following version:

THE DOOR BOY'S LAST GOOD-BYE [2]

I

In the mine depths' gloom and silence,
Void of sunlight though 'tis mid-day,
There a fearless little door boy sat alone;
Unseen dangers hover round him
At his post upon the gangway,
While he works, and thinks of mother sick at home;
Without warning there's a cave-in,
Rock and timber downward crashing
Hurl the lad moaning to the rocky floor;
But his pale lips framed this message
As his breath was quick and gasping,
"Good-bye mother, Heav'n protect you evermore."

Chorus

All his thoughts were of his mother,
All for her his broken pleading
As he lay there, dying, at his shattered door;
Bright-winged angels caught this message
As his life was quickly fleeting,
"Good-bye mother, Heav'n protect you evermore."

In her dreams the mother fancies
She can hear him softly calling,

[2] Copyright, 1902, by Joseph S. Coons & Co.

She can hear him beck'ning from the starry sky;
Soon her lips will close forever,
And the bitter tears cease falling,
She will meet him where they never say good-bye.
Just a door boy in a coal mine,
A brave-hearted manly fellow,
Who lays dying 'neath the wreckage where he fell;
Deathly gases are his mantle,
Splintered roof rock is his pillow,
Just a door boy, but a hero, fare thee well.

2

One evening in June, 1925, while touring through the lower end of the Wyoming Valley, I was directed to the home of Mrs. Thomas Donnelly on West Main Street, Plymouth. Mrs. Donnelly sang this ballad for me and then transcribed the words from an old copy-book where she had noted them after hearing them sung many years ago. She had recorded the words phonetically which resulted in such substitutions as the preposition "in" for the conjunction, "and," in the first line of the first stanza.

Her version follows:

In a mine depths' gloom and silence,
Void of sunlight though 'tis mid-day,
There the fearless little door boy toils alone;
Unseen dangers hover round him,
At his post upon the gangway,
While he works and thinks of mother sick at home.

Without warning there's a cave-in,
Rock and timber downward crashing
Hurl the young lad moaning to the rocky floor;
But his pale lips framed his message,
As his breath comes quick and gasping:
"Good-bye mother, heaven protect you evermore."

CHORUS

All his thoughts were of his mother,
All for her his broken pleading,
As he lay there dying by his shattered door;
Bright-winged angels caught his message
As his life was quickly fleeting:
"Good-bye mother, heaven protect you evermore."

In her dreams the mother fancies
She can hear him softly calling—
Sees him beckon to her from the starry sky.
Soon her eyes will close forever
And her bitter tears cease falling:
She will meet him where they never say good-bye.
Just a door boy in the coal mine,
A brave-hearted manly fellow
Who lies buried 'neath the wreckage where he fell;
Deathly gases are his mantle,
Splintered roof rock is his pillow,
Just a door boy but a hero (Fare thee well).

THE DRIVER BOY

THE mule driver led a freer, more adventurous career than either the slate picker or door tender. To-day mules are employed only on short hauls where it is uneconomical to use motors, but years ago they bore the whole burden of underground transportation. Harnessed in tandem usually, they pulled empty cars from the bottom of the shaft or slope to the miners' chambers [1] along labyrinthian gangways, and fetched back those that the miners had filled. Driver boy and mule spent many hours of a working day together, and often there sprang up between them a comaraderie that bordered on mutual affection.

Mule drivers were in the forefront of all the mischievous business that went on around a colliery, especially in the matter of initiating new boys. They chewed tobacco; inhaled smoke from cigarette, cigar, or pipe with the nonchalance of their elders. Swore like sailors on a spree; wagered their earnings on gamecocks; fought with one another like devils; and in countless other ways conducted themselves as little gentlemen ought not. But all this was forgivable, I believe, in unschooled boys some of them with warped souls and stunted bodies, who spent at least ten hours of a working day in murky gangways

[1] In the southern field, where the seams pitch sharply, the miners' working place is known as a breast.

where the air was infiltrated with mine gases; where the water dripped down on their heads from the surface; where every nook and cranny hid some lurking danger.

"The Driver Boy," a ballad of rare charm, was made up by John A. Murphy, a miner of Dickson City, Lackawanna County, in 1900. He got his inspiration from a tragic incident which he had witnessed a short time before. I have been told that the ballad was widely popular in the northern field and have heard snatches of it myself in different places. Yet this is the first time that it has been dignified with publication; its circulation must have been achieved by word of mouth in the manner characteristic of folklore.

I heard part of it in the summer of 1925 and was deeply moved—months after I found myself humming the tune and recalling some of the plaintive lines. A miner's wife in Plymouth Township, Luzerne County, told me that she used to croon her young ones to sleep with "The Driver Boy" years ago, and I assume that many another mother has done the same thing.

A letter from Murphy conveys the impression to me that he is one of those proverbial diamonds in the rough that one runs across in the hard coal fields from time to time. This collection is studded with them. They are far from easy to coax out of their obscurity—a more modest, retiring group of men than these miner bards would be hard to find. Well,

I had written Murphy for a sketch of his life and for a few facts as to how he came to write "The Driver Boy." He wrote back to reply that since he was "not looking for notoriety (!) or any recompense whatever" he saw no reason for giving me much of his history. But he did bring himself around to writing the following:

"The song was inspired and composed through an incident that came under my observation in 1900. A cruel father under the influence of drink was beating his son, a boy about 14 years of age, when I stepped in and prevented further abuse. Some weeks after, the boy, who was a mule driver in the mines, caught a most severe cold, pneumonia set in and he died. My thoughts drifted back to the night of the beating and being of a poetical turn of mind, it gave me an inspiration to put my little talent to use. The song is written to the tune of 'The Little Shoeblack,' a song I heard in England nearly fifty years ago. It has never been published or copyrighted, so it is yours if it will be of any use to you or those who may read your book.

"During the World War, I wrote a lot of poetry, which my friends said was very good, and several critics also praised my efforts along that line. I sent the poetry to several newspapers and they gladly gave them space and invited more. I have only a meager education and as you see my grammar is bad, but in the solitude of the mines my thoughts are inspired and drifts to what you may term, silly effusions. Be that as it may, I get some little pleasure out of it after all. I have been employed as signal man at the Johnson Colliery, Dickson City, Pa., for a number of years, it being one of the many collieries operated by the

Scranton Coal Co. Should you want any further information in publishing your book, I will gladly send it in my next letter."

THE DRIVER BOY

While passing by a house one night, I heard a painful cry,
And gazing in, I saw a sight that soon bedimmed my eye.
A boy was kneeling on the floor, his age was scarce fourteen,
Upon his pale but handsome face the mark of death was seen,
His father, stern and cruel, with a horsewhip in his hand
Had beat the boy in such a way that he could scarcely stand;
Because he'd come home from the mines with sickness he complained,
And as each blow descended, oh! the poor boy cried in pain.

CHORUS

"Oh! do not whip me, papa dear, for I've done nothing wrong,
Oh! spare me this time papa please, I won't be with you long,
For I'm too weak to drive a mule, my little bones are sore;
I will always love you papa dear, don't beat me any more."

In underground the boy did toil from early morn till night,
His little limbs were growing weak; he could not stand the fight
'Gainst hunger and ill-treatment, which no strong man could endure;
So he was forced to leave his work though he begged from door to door.
His mother pleaded, but in vain, to spare her hope and pride.
"Oh! do not kill my darling boy, beat me instead," she cried.

The villain bade her stand aside, her pleadings were in vain,
Again the whip descended and the boy cried out again.

The little fellow then crept off to his cold bed on the floor.
He prayed that God would take him to that bright and
golden shore.
"And please forgive my father, for I love him still," said he,
"And he was drunk and ugly or he would not ill-use me."
The parents were soon startled by a wild despairing cry;
They both rushed, frantic, to the room wherein there lay
their boy,
The father soon repented and these were the words he said:
"Oh! God, I am a murderer"! For his driver boy was dead.

Edward Glodac, a member of local Union number 1132, U. M. W. of A., after reading one of my articles in the United Mine Workers' Journal containing snatches of "The Driver Boy," supplied the Journal with an almost complete version of the ballad from memory. It follows:

I

While passing by a house one day
I heard a painful cry,
Gazing in I saw a sight
Which soon dimmed my eye;
A boy was kneeling on the floor,
His age was scarce sixteen,
But on his pale and handsome face
The marks of death were seen;
His father stern and cruel stood,
A big whip in his hand,

He beat the boy in such a way
That he could hardly stand—
Because he came home from the mines,
Of sickness did complain,
As the whip descended,
How the poor boy cried in pain!

CHORUS

"Oh, please papa, don't whip me more
For I've done nothing wrong,
Spare me this time, papa, please,
For I won't be with you long;
I'm too weak to drive a mule,
My little bones are sore,
I've always loved you, papa, please,
Don't whip me any more."

Yet he was forced to leave his work
And beg from door to door,
The mother pleaded, but in vain,
To spare her hopeful pride:
"Please don't whip my darling boy,
Whip me instead," she cried.
The villain bade her stand aside,
As she would get the same,
As the whip descended,
How the poor boy cried in pain!
The little fellow then crept off
To his cold bed on the floor,
He asked the Lord to take him
To that bright and golden shore;
"Please forgive my papa,
For I love him still," said he,

"He was so drunk and ugly,
Or he would not ill-treat me."
The parents then were startled
By the wild despairing cry,
They both rushed madly in the room
Wherein their boy did lie;
The father then retreated,
And these are the words he said:
"My God! I am a murderer,
My driver boy is dead"!

2

The following variant of the first stanza and chorus came to me as I sauntered along the State Highway in Plymouth Township:

While strolling down the lane one day, I heard an awful cry,
I gazed into a window as a tear came in my eye,
A boy was kneeling on the floor, his age was scarce sixteen,
While o'er him stood his cruel dad—the poor boy cried in pain.

CHORUS

Please don't whip me papa, for I've done nothing wrong.
Please don't whip me papa, for I won't be with you long;
I am too weak to drive a mule, my little bones are sore,
So please don't whip me papa, please don't whip me anymore.

From another woman, who as a little girl, sang the ballad in the old B. I. A. building in Wilkes-Barre back in 1902, I obtained a slightly different

version. The cry was "mournful"; the boy was "lying" instead of "kneeling"; his age was "fourteen" and not "sixteen"; he "was" instead of "cried" in pain, and finally the latter half of the fourth line of the chorus sang: "I'll love you evermore."

Incidentally, the B. I. A. (Boys Industrial Association) was an appropriate place to sing this ballad. It was a unique philanthropic institution founded by the late Mrs. Ellen W. Palmer of Wilkes-Barre and fostered by her for many years in the interest of the working boy. Breaker boys, mine mule drivers, mill hands, newsboys and bootblacks rubbed elbows under one roof. The B. I. A. is a happy memory to me as I was one of "Mrs. Palmer's boys." The old brick building standing in an alley back of the city hall is now occupied by the American Legion as its home.

THE HANDSOME MINER BOY

Obtained from John Hory of Ashland, Schuylkill County, the author.

One evening fair as I walked out,
I heard a maid complain;
By her lamentations
I knew she was in pain.
She said, "I ne'er will marry him,
So they need not me annoy:
If e'er I wed with any man
It's my handsome miner boy.

"He is my joy and heart's delight,
And evermore will be;

If I cannot be his wife
I'll live in misery.
For love it has entangled me,
And that I can't deny,
I'll give my father's fortune
For my handsome miner boy.

"The first time that I saw him
Was a cold December day,
He passed me by and cast an eye
That stole my heart away.
To me he looked so beautiful
How can I life enjoy,
Forever to be parted from
My handsome miner boy?

"My parents talk about disgrace,
And say that he is poor,
To change my resolution
Or they'll turn me from their door;
But I have money plenty,
With them I'll not comply,
I'll go and find the lad I love—
My handsome miner boy."

Then I left my concealment,
And steered upon my way,
Though unperceived, for her I grieved,
As homeward I did stray.
She looked so young and innocent
As she sat down to cry,
I envied him his happiness,
That handsome miner boy.

A WHITE SLAVE OF THE MINE

THIS ballad, so simple and yet so strong in its appeal to the heart, was written by the late Sam W. Boyd, a Wilkes-Barre newspaperman. It made a hit in Dan Hart's play of the mines, "Underground" which had its first night in Pittsburgh in the early '90s. Harry Tempest of Corydon, Ind., an old-time bard and minstrel, recited it for me in the back room of a chop house in Atlantic City. Hart, incidentally, is mayor of Wilkes-Barre.

I'm a little collier lad,
  Hardworking all the day,
From early morn till late at night
  No time have I to play.
Down in the bowels of the earth
  Where no bright sun rays shine,
You'll find me busy at my work,
  A white slave of the mine.

CHORUS (sung twice)

Our lot in life is full of strife;
  But we make no murmur or sign,
For daily we toil down deep in the soil—
  The white slaves of the mines.

When daylight comes I go to work,
  When dark I go to bed,
The money that my labor earns,
  Keeps us in meat and bread.
Poor father he was killed one day,
  Yet mother for him pines,
And that is why you see me here,
  A white slave of the mine.

But after all when life is done,
  And God has called the roll,
I hope to find He's not forgot
  The little collier soul;
Hard work and toil has dwarfed him so,
  And ground him down so fine—
That is why you see me here
  A white slave of the mine.

DOWN IN A COAL MINE

THIS is a stage song written in 1872 by one J. B. Geoghegan and published by S. Brainard's Sons. Not long after its publication it reached the anthracite coal region and became so popular that it took on the color of an indigenous plant. In fact, when I first heard it I believed it to be such. Later I was informed that the famous Harrigan and Hart combination had given it to the world, but a further search revealed its source.

Its chorus was familiar wherever black diamonds were mined and even children lisped its catching lines.

John F. Burke, original Dublin Dan comedian with Howerth's "Hibernica," always included it in his repertoire as a sure-fire number when he came among his miner friends. He sang it so often and so well that old miners when they recall the song invariably link his name with it.

Dressed in the homespun of a coal digger, a pick thrown across his shoulder, his other hand holding a safety lamp, he strutted back and forth on the stage singing the song.

DOWN IN A COAL MINE[1]

I am a jovial collier lad, and blithe as blithe can be,
For let the times be good or bad they're all the same to me;
'Tis little of the world I know and care less for its ways,
For where the dog star never glows I wear away my days.

CHORUS

Down in a coal mine, underneath the ground,
Where a gleam of sunshine never can be found;
Digging dusky diamonds all the season round,
Down in a coal mine, underneath the ground.

My hands are horny, hard and black with working in the vein,
And like the clothes upon my back my speech is rough and plain;
Well, if I stumble with my tongue I've one excuse to say,
'Tis not the collier's heart that's wrong, 'tis the head that goes astray.

At every shift, be it soon or late, I haste my bread to earn,
And anxiously my kindred wait and watch for my return:
For death that levels all alike, whate'er their rank may be,
Amid the fire and damp may strike and fling his darts at me.

How little do the great ones care who sit at home secure,
What hidden dangers colliers dare, what hardships they endure;

[1] Originally published and copyrighted in 1872 by S. Brainard's Sons.

The very fires their mansions boast, to cheer themselves and wives,
Mayhap were kindled at the cost of jovial colliers' lives.

Then cheer up, lads, and make ye much of every joy ye can;
But let your mirth be always such as best becomes a man;
However fortune turns about we'll still be jovial souls,
For what would America be without the lads that look for coals.

John Walsh, a miner of Pottsville, who himself occasionally delights his fellow workers with his poetry, wrote down the following stanzas for me:

I am a jovial collier lad
As blithe as blithe can be,
For let the times be good or bad
They are all the same to me.
'Tis little of this world I know,
And care less of its ways,
For where the dogstar never glows
I wear away my days.

CHORUS

Down in a coal mine
Underneath the ground,
Where a gleam of sunshine,
Never can be found.
Digging dusky diamonds
All the year around,
Way down in a coal mine
Underneath the ground.

My hands are horny, hard and black
From working in the vein,
And like the clothes upon my back
My speech is rough and plain.
Well, if I stumble with my tongue,
I've one excuse to say:
It's not the collier's heart is wrong,
'Tis the head that goes astray.

THE PASSING OF THE MINE MULE

IF it should be asked what one quality in the mule enabled him to contribute so much to the development of the anthracite coal mining industry, the answer would be: instinct. It was his instinct, keen and agile, which for nearly a century made him an indispensable link in the industry's haulage chain—this and his sheer brawn and ability to withstand the hardships of a mine.

How this instinct sometimes asserted itself is illustrated admirably in the following story of a little black mule. About the middle of the past century an explosion of fire-damp [1] swept brimstone and hell-fire through a small mine operated by a man named Spencer at Black Heath, Schuylkill County.

> For three long days they stood the blaze
> In sulphur, fire and smoke.[2]

Many of the entrapped miners were roasted alive; others escaping the flames, were choked by that dread after-damp which comes in the wake of a mine explosion. Some of those who met the latter fate might have saved themselves had they been able to

[1] Methane; being lighter than air it is found near the roof of a coal seam.

[2] Part of a forgotten ballad, "Spencer's Fiery Slope" which sang of this tragedy.

grope their way to the sump[3] and duck their heads in it. Its water, though far from pure, still contained enough oxygen to have afforded them a breathing spell. But the only creature to reach it was the little black mule. After plunging her nostrils into the turgid water, she leaped up the steeply graded slope. And her own singed body gave the village its first inkling of the hell that was raging below.

Few miners can resist growing reminiscent when the mule bobs up in conversation, for mule driving was part of their apprenticeship. I have been regaled with delightful tales on the subject myself, some humorous and some not quite so. No doubt this peculiar hybrid inspired many ballads, yet none seems to have survived; or rather, none came within hearing distance during my research. A stray piece of five lines leading a news story appeared in the Wilkes-Barre Record. Thomas E. Heffernan of Wilkes-Barre who had written the story sent a note to inform me that as far as he could discover "the five lines are the entire thing." He attributed their authorship to Con Carbon of Wilkes-Barre.

Here they are:

> My sweetheart's the mule in the mines,
> I drive her without any lines,
> On the bumper I stand
> With my whip in my hand,
> My sweetheart's the mule in the mines.

[3] A cistern at the bottom of a slope or shaft into which drains all the water of a mine.

The mule is passing out of the colliery. Even now his silhouette is barely discernible in the distance. His head is drooped, his light harness hangs loosely on his back and the "spreader-chain" trails behind leaving a faint sound of its clangor, as he drags his weary feet toward the horizon. Soon he will sink into space. And when that day dawns what now lingers of another, more picturesque era will have gone with him.

V

FOUR MINE ACCIDENTS

THE AVONDALE MINE DISASTER

THE Avondale mine disaster is as firmly embedded in the tradition of the anthracite coal region as is a coal seam in the strata which sandwich it.

The Avondale, like many another early colliery, was ventilated by means of a furnace which was built on the bottom level, its flue running up the height of the shaft. On the morning of September 6, 1869, the partition of the flue caught fire and by 10 o'clock the coal breaker, which had been built directly over the mouth of the shaft, was aflame.

There was but one outlet from the mine and it was the shaft now filled with smoke and fire. Trapped in the stygian depths were 108 men and boys who died for want of good air as mine gases sucked up the little oxygen that had been left after the air current stopped circulating. When the flames had been put out finally, a dog enclosed in a box with a slot top attached to a lighted lantern was let down to test the quality of the air below. The dog survived the ordeal, yet the light had been snuffed out. This was not exactly a sign to go into raptures over, since it indicated the presence of large quantities of black

[1] See "The Great Disaster at Avondale Colliery," by H. W. Chase.

damp, or carbon dioxide, but it did hold out a slight hope to those anxious thousands near the shaft that their loved ones might still be alive. For had not the dog come back alive? The danger was great, yet men dared face it. But they soon returned to the surface gasping for fresh air. Then Thomas W. Williams of Plymouth and David Jones of Grand Tunnel—

> Two Welshmen brave, without dismay,
> And courage without fail,
> Went down the shaft without delay
> In the mines of Avondale.

On reaching the foot of the shaft, they signalled for pick and shovel which were lowered to them. Both were suffocated in their valiant effort. But the work of rescue went on. Shortly after midnight Tuesday a rescue crew finally penetrated to the bottom and about three o'clock found the first two bodies which were horribly bloated. Then, after three and a half hours of groping through the recesses of this "blind prison" they finally encountered a barricade. It had been improvised by the despairing victims out of a mine car, powder kegs and parts of their clothing. When it was broken down, a horrible scene greeted the eye. The bodies of sixty-seven men and boys lay huddled in a hideous heap. When the final list of dead was checked, it was found 110 had died.

The world was shocked by the news. When a relief fund was launched help came from every quarter, and among the contributors was Queen Victoria; many of the victims had been her subjects. The ballad of the disaster came unexpectedly one day, as if it were a delayed echo from the deep. It spread throughout the hard coal region like a hurricane. And for a quarter of a century or more thereafter, mothers crooned their little ones to sleep on its melody. Crusty miners gathered in a barroom for a devil-may-care time invariably became pensive as the tragic strain issued from a fiddle or from the lips of one of their number. Many a saddened miner eased his heart singing the mournful lines either at work deep down a murky catacomb or in the privacy of his humble cottage back in the patch. And certainly no public entertainment was thought complete without "The Avondale Mine Disaster" on its program.

I heard about the ballad in as widely separated cities as Carbondale and Pottsville, which, I believe, attests to the universality of its one-time vogue. Kyran Donahue of Pottsville, former district mine inspector, who had put me on the trail of other ballads, was the first to suggest it to me. Shortly after, it occurred to me that if anyone might remember it that one was Mrs. James Wylie, of Edwardsville, Luzerne County, the only surviving widow of the disaster; Andrew Forthingham, a young Scotchman, was the name of her first husband who died in

the mine. The previous fall I had interviewed her for the Wilkes-Barre Labor News, so that when I called at her little home in Bunny Lane on May 29th, 1925, I was no stranger. She was then 72 years old. She retold something of that sad story, but of the ballad she remembered only a few stray lines.

The trail from the Wylie home led to Avondale itself. In a corner candy and tobacco shop, at the far end of the village, I found John McKeon, the proprietor, who was the only man living in Avondale to have witnessed the historic fire. At the time he was one of the first to see the flames coming from the breaker, having caught sight of them from the Chauncey breaker down the road where he worked as an oiler; he was 12 years old then.

For a long time after the mine had been reconditioned, he told me, a superstition that the spirits of the dead miners stalked through gangway and chamber haunted the village; and many refused to return to work on that account. The superstition crystallized into a legend which the more credulous believed to their dying days. The germ of it, as Mr. McKeon remembered, lay in the fact that one day a miner rubbed a lucifer match, then an innovation in that section, across his wet clothes. The match, of course, could not strike fire but it did draw coruscating strokes which must have had an eery effect in that dark gangway. Coming so soon after the tragedy, the flashes all but petrified a miner working some distance away, who, when he could summon the courage,

ran as fast as his feet would take him, yelling that he had just seen a ghost.

All that Mr. McKeon could tell me about the ballad itself was that a Jewish peddler from Scranton had written it. This peddler, about forty years of age, wearing a black beard, had sold clothing to many of those who died in the mine.

On my way back to the trolley car some two miles distant, I met Joe Hillard, a short, thin miner, in front of his home. I reminded him of the October day five years before when he and his neighbor, Will Young, were entombed for twelve hours in the Jersey Hill mine. Then he recalled that as he sat in the kitchen of his home with his wife and their seven little ones huddled about him shortly after being freed, he had described to me, then a reporter for the Wilkes-Barre Record, some of his experiences during those tense, twelve hours. When I told him the purpose of my new visit to Plymouth Township, he directed me to Jerome Lewis in Plymouth Borough, who had one day remarked having found a broadside with the ballad of the Avondale mine disaster printed on it.

And within a half hour I held that precious sheet of paper in my hand and experienced a thrill I have no words to describe. It had yellowed somewhat and been handled to the point of fragility; and most of the words in the sixth and seventh lines of the second stanza had been worn away beyond recall. Constable Matthew Mahon of Avondale, who had

sung the ballad in his youth, a fact remembered by a number of the other villagers, told me that the one I had was the original Avondale mine disaster ballad. The broadside contained the name of James Fox of Scranton.

THE AVONDALE MINE DISASTER

Good Christians all, both great and small,
I pray ye lend an ear,
And listen with attention while
The truth I will declare;
When you hear this lamentation,
It will cause ye to weep and wail,
About the suffocation
In the mines of Avondale.

On the sixth day of September,
Eighteen hundred and sixty-nine,
Those miners all then got a call
To go work in the mine;
But little did they think that day
That death . . . vale [1]
Before . . .[1]
The mines of Avondale.

The women and the children,
Their hearts were filled with joy,

[1] Calvin Snyder, 29 North First Street, Shamokin, Pa., supplied the missing words to the *United Mine Workers' Journal*. Completed, these lines read as follows:

"That death would gloom the vale
Before they would return again from"

To see the men go work again,
And likewise every boy;
But a dismal sight in broad daylight,
Soon made them turn pale,
When they saw the breaker burning
O'er the mines of Avondale.

From here and there, and everywhere,
They gathered in a crowd,
Some tearing off their clothes and hair,
And crying out aloud—
Get out our husbands and our sons,
Death he's going to steal
Their lives away without delay
In the mines of Avondale.

But all in vain, there was no hope
One single soul to save,
For there is no second outlet
From the subterranean cave.
No pen can write the awful fright
And horror that did prevail,
Among those dying victims,
In the mines of Avondale.

A consultation then was held,
'Twas asked who'd volunteer
For to go down this dismal shaft,
To seek their comrades dear;
Two Welshmen brave, without dismay,
And courage without fail,
Went down the shaft, without delay,
In the mines of Avondale.

When at the bottom they arrived,
And thought to make their way,
One of them died for want of air,
While the other in great dismay,
He gave a sign to hoist him up,
To tell the dreadful tale,
That all were lost forever
In the mines of Avondale.

Every effort then took place
To send down some fresh air;
The men that next went down again
They took of them good care;
They traversed through the chambers,
And this time did not fail
In finding those dead bodies
In the mines of Avondale.

Sixty-seven was the number
That in a heap were found,
It seemed they were bewailing
Their fate in underground;
They found the father with his son
Clasped in his arms so pale.
It was a heart-rending scene
In the mines of Avondale.

Now to conclude, and make an end,
Their number I'll pen down—
One hundred and ten of brave stout men
Were smothered underground;

They're in their graves till the last day,
Their widows may bewail,
And the orphans' cries they rend the skies
All round through Avondale!

The following two verses, which vary from the text in the broadsheet, I picked up on my travels through the region.

The sixth day of September
In eighteen sixty-nine,
I never shall forget that day
Until the end of time,
One hundred and eight men
Went down the mine that day
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Two Welshmen brave without delay,
They ventured down the shaft,
One of them died for want of air
The other one turned quite pale.
He rapped the wire to hoist them up
To tell the dreadful tale
That they all were lost forever
In the mines of Avondale.

CHARLEY HILL'S OLD SLOPE

I FIRST learned of the existence of this ballad in Kulpmont, Northumberland County, one Sunday in March, but not until August did I obtain it from Patrick Brislin at his home in Wilmington, Del. Gray-haired, the tell-tale marks of the miner on his face and hands, Brislin had left the coal region some years before, and was living with his aged mother, Mrs. Sarah Brislin. With four persons as an audience, he sang that old ballad with a strength of feeling that was touching. His father had sung it frequently many years before and it was listening to him that he had learned it. His grandfather, Condy Brislin, was one of the first Irish miners in the anthracite coal region, coming to Pottsville in 1840.[1] There is a tradition in the family that Charley Hill's slope, located at Mine Hill Gap, Pottsville, was one of the first mines he worked in. This fact would justify the adjective "old" which is applied to the slope in the ballad.

The description of the accident and the subsequent episodes which I give below, were given to me in substance by Anthony Ferguson at his home in Merriam Patch, Northumberland County, one evening in August, 1925. Old and broken now, he had started his mining career as a slate picker in Hill's

[1] See page 89.

breaker the summer before the accident; the Ferguson mentioned in the ballad was his father.

Though the first line of the second stanza places the time of the accident as the "eighteenth day of June," Anthony Ferguson insisted that it really happened "three days after the assassination of President Lincoln" or April 17th. The victims were riding up the slope on their way home when close to the surface their car jumped the tracks. For a second or two it stood its ground as if in defiance of the very law of gravity, and then, the chain having been broken by the sudden jerk, hurtled back into the unfriendly deep.

The car was half full of muck from the sump and when this load had been added to by the weight of nine boys and men, it could not make the heavy grade. The haulage chain was evidently too light to pull that heavy load; wire rope has practically replaced chains for haulage purpose in anthracite mines.

As generally happens in the anthracite coal fields, the news of the tragedy spread quickly and to the mouth of the slope there came rushing men, women and little ones. A team of horses happened to be standing near the opening, one of them named "Lion." When cries for the parish priest and the mine doctor, both living in Minersville about four miles away, came out of the despairing crowd, Mike Laffee, a miner, quickly unharnessed "Lion" and mounting, spurred him on to a fleetness the like of

which the horse had probably never known before. The faithful beast brought Laffee to the doorstep of Father Malone's rectory. When some time later he returned to his mate still standing in harness at the mouth of the mine, his forelegs slid out gracefully before him, his head dropped between them, and having performed the most praiseworthy thing of his life, passed out.

A moment or two after Mike Laffee had started on his spectacular ride to Minersville, Ned Casey, another miner, heard of the accident as he was washing the coal grime from his body. Though stripped to the waist and barefooted, he set out to fetch the priest, not stopping to inquire if he had been sent for. How fast he ran may be seen from the fact that he reached the rectory only a few feet behind Mike Laffee and the horse. "Come on Father," he shouted when he finally caught his breath, "they're all murthered in Hill's ould slope." Then he dropped to the floor in utter exhaustion. Father Malone and his housekeeper, Lizzy Shore, lifted him to a couch and covered his lathered body with a comforter. Then they took the carriage to the slope.

They found Shannon lying several feet from the spot where the car had jumped the rails, his brains oozing out. Father Malone pushed them back and begged Lizzy Shore to hold a white handkerchief over the hole in the head as he took the dying man's confession. This proved unbearable for the already unnerved housekeeper and in her picturesque Kilkenny brogue she broke out. "Father, that's ver-ry

quare." "Get off wi' ye," the good father replied in all the seriousness of that moment, "this man ud make a confession to a priest if his head was cut clean off." In his last moments, Shannon, who was a former New York long horeman, muttered "Lord, have mercy on all the sowls that died here to-day." His prayer is paraphrased in the fourth line of the fourth stanza.

This episode impressed the simple folk of the countryside as a miracle and for years after they continued to marvel at it. The victims were all buried on the same day in the parish cemetery at Minersville. Charley Hill's miners, poor though they were, shared the funeral expenses. Raffles and shindigs were held, patronized by miners from all that section, to keep the widows and orphans from starving.

Within a year, however, Charley Hill shut down his rickety slope forever, and the miners of Mine Hill Gap turned their weary eyes toward new horizons.

Anthony Ferguson told me that one stanza was missing from my version of the ballad. It sang of Michael Gaynor, an eight-year old fan blower whose head was split open as he was jolted out of the ill-fated car midway down the incline. One line went—

By medical care, he did repair, and soon revived again.

Michael was a widow's only son. His mother not long after removed to Locust Gap on the other side of Broad Mountain, and fifteen years later the

former fan blower was killed as he fell down Wolf's slope at this patch.

Ferguson recited the last two lines of the third stanza as follows:

Close to the land she made a stand, the chain had quickly broke,
Which caused widows to mourn their loss that day, at Hill's old slope.

In McAdoo, I obtained the following variant of the fifth stanza:

It would grieve your heart with pity to see those miners' wives,
Likewise their little children, for dismal were their cries,
Saying, "Mother dear, oh mother dear, we may give up all hope,
For our daddies dear, no more we'll hear; they're lost in Hill's old slope."

CHARLEY HILL'S OLD SLOPE

Come all ye true born Irishmen wherever you may be,
I hope you'll attention pay and listen unto me;
It's of those true born Irishmen that left their native clay,
To seek their destination here in Americ-a.

It was on the eighteenth day of June when flowers were in full bloom,
The small birds hopped from tree to tree and sweetly chimed their tune,
To my surprise, I heard a noise that gave me a fatal stroke,
When I heard of that sad accident at Charley Hill's old slope.

In future time this cruel crime to you I will explain;
Nine upright men ventured their lives to ride upon a chain.
When near the land it made a stand the chain it quickly broke,
Which caused many a widow to mourn her loss at Charley Hill's old slope.

There was Michael Hunt and Ferguson,[2] they met their fate that day,
While Jimmy Sharp and Billy Hughes in their bloody gore they lay,
Though Shannon's brains lay on the plane, a few doleful words he spoke,
Saying: "Th' Almighty King, may our sowls bring this day from Hill's ould slope."

It would grieve your heart with pity for to see those miners' wives,
All looking for their dead husbands with heart-rending cries,
Their children's cries, raised to the skies, abandoning every hope;
Saying: "Our daddies dear, no more we'll see; they're lost in Hill's old slope."

Jane Sharp[3] she stood upon the spot with a sad and mournful cry,
Her orphans round, all on the ground, their tears I did espy,

[2] Thomas Ferguson.
[3] She was formerly Mrs. Jane Hodge. Her second husband, Jimmy Sharp, and two sons by her first marriage, were killed in this accident; Richard Hodge, a third son, narrowly escaped death.

With bitter cries she wrung her hands and her coal black
hair she tore,
For her husband and two of her loving sons lay bleeding in
their gore.

A lady fair stood weeping there, Mis' Donahue was her
name,
With bitter cries and dismal sighs she sorely did complain,
All pressed with grief without relief, with trembling lips
she spoke:
"Will they ever bring my husband out of Charley Hill's old
slope"?

It would grieve your heart with pity to see the number of
the slain,
Some with their legs and arms broken, some more with
shattered heads,
Nine of those doomed lay in one room—what a dreadful
sight was there!
May the God of Light, this blessed night, hear each widow's
prayer!

Now to conclude and finish, I have no more to say,
May God look on the fatherless and poor orphans here
to-day!
May God look on the fatherless this blessed night, I hope!
And may God have mercy on their souls who died in Hill's
old slope.

THE SUGAR NOTCH ENTOMBMENT

ONE Sunday in July, 1925, I was a guest of Jacob Leinenbach of Ashland whose brothers had given me many leads in the Mahanoy Valley. Back of his home lived a mine worker who, I had been informed, sang the ballad of the Sugar Notch entombment. My host brought him in and introduced us.

He told me that thirty-two years before he played the role of the Samaritan to a miner from up country who was down-at-heels, and that this had happened in a barroom where the befriended stranger, in gratitude, sang him the doleful ballad of miners sealed in a living tomb up Sugar Notch way. Though the sad lines had stuck in his mind for years after he had learned them, he remembered only the stanzas I have here.

The entombment in the No. 10 slope of the Lehigh & Wilkes-Barre Coal Company at Sugar Notch, which lasted five days and as many nights, began an hour or two after midnight on Wednesday, April 23, 1879.[1] A gang of men on night-shift were driving a new gangway into a seam of coal 1000 feet below the surface when the roof caved in, the debris block-

[1] See "Record of the Times," April 24, 1879, page 4.

ing their way out. Compelled to exist in this tomb were Charles Hawkins and Edward Price, the contractors; Patrick and James Green (who were brothers) and Barney Reilly, their laborers; as well as Johnny Clark, a 13-year old door boy and William Kenney, a young mule driver. The boys (Kenney was on his mule) had risked their own lives when they ran to spread the alarm.

Failing in attempts to become free, the prisoners resigned themselves to an all-pitying Providence and to the relentless drilling and hammering of the rescue gang. On Thursday they killed the hunger-mad mule for his flesh; one of the Green brothers, using a hammer, felled the beast with seven blows on the head; Kenney chopped the head off with an axe, while Hawkins cut off the hind legs. The meat at hand, they made sure that no gas lurked about, and then built themselves a little fire which they kindled with their oil lamps. They cooked the meat in the covers of their dinner cans, the ditch which gurgled near by supplying the water. Then at 9 o'clock Monday morning, the rescuers made their way through the barrier at last, and crawling on their bellies through a hole they came upon their imprisoned fellows. What a scene there followed—the joyousness of it knew no bounds!

THE SUGAR NOTCH ENTOMBMENT

It was in the month of April in eighteen seventy-nine,
When seven men from Sugar Notch came to work down in the mine,
The night shift was before them and honest they began;
The driver came and told them that the mine was cavin' in.

(Second stanza is missing.)

Pricey held the safety lamp and Harper [2] he was last,
Mackie [3] he put up his hand and shut off the gas (?)
The rocks stood on their edges up against the roof,
And here we stood for proof (?)

We walked in the gangway and there we sat down,
We held a conversation and it went all around,
Some were very hungry and some were very weak,
Says Johnny Glynn,[4] "We'll kill our mule and have a jolly feast."

The driver went and got his mule and tied him to a prop,
The tears came rolling from his eyes, saying, "Harry, you must drop."
On picking up the hammer he found the hammer to be dull—
He hit the poor old mule ten times [5] on the head before he broke his skull.

[2] Hawkins?
[3] No such miner was in the entombment.
[4] Jimmy Green meant probably.
[5] See previous page.

"Harry, you're dead and gone, your life is gone astray,
But many a hundred wagons you've pulled out of this gangway,
Many a driver's drove you, but now your drivin's at an end."
And then the mine began to cave in around the seven men.

THE TWIN-SHAFT MINE SQUEEZE

THE dangers that lurk in an anthracite coal mine are many and diverse but none haunts the mine worker more than a fall of the strata which he calls the roof. It was such a fall, spread over six or seven acres, that buried scores of miners in the mysterious depths of the Twin-Shaft colliery at Pittston early on the morning of June 28, 1896.

The rock between the fifth and sixth levels had been "working"—showing symptoms of an impending slide—for several days. To prevent its caving in, sixty-five to one hundred and thirty-five men—the exact number is unknown—went down the sixth level to timber it. They made the mistake of entering the section where the overlying strata pressed hardest, instead of working toward it from a place where they might escape, as common sense and custom dictated. Somehow water flooded the fifth level, presumably from the Susquehanna River and the weight of this water broke the already weakened roof. You may imagine the horrible death that must have come to the men below as water, sand, rock and coal swept down upon them in one sudden fury.

During the vain search for their bodies which went on for many days as the whole region tensely waited for the news, a young mule driver named Harry

Tempest down in the Turkey Run colliery, Shenandoah, struggled to express the feelings which the catastrophe had stirred in him. He composed the ballad we have here in odd moments snatched from mule-driving, writing the words by the light of a tiny flame which sputtered from the lamp in his cap, and on rough paper used by the miners to make cartridges with. It made Harry Tempest, already known as a singer, a greater favorite than ever in the Shenandoah hang-outs frequented by miners.

I met Tempest in a chop house at Atlantic City on a Sunday in May, 1925, through Patrick J. "Giant" O'Neill, another old-time favorite miner minstrel. He was a medium-sized, well built man with broad shoulders and a tinge of iron gray on his large head of brown hair. His Irish blue eyes reflected a warm, effervescent nature, at the same time mirroring a talent for the droll and whimsical.

Tempest was born at St. Clair, Schuylkill County, in 1871 and as a child was taken to Shenandoah where he grew up. His talent as an entertainer earned him wide popularity through the anthracite coal region and led to years on the professional stage. His best known role was that of Father John Whalen in "The Parish Priest" by Dan Hart, now Mayor of Wilkes-Barre. He also took the part of Dan in the play, "Why Girls Leave Home" which A. H. Woods produced in 1910.

Tiring of the uncertainties of an actor's life, he returned to Schuylkill County and embarked in the

hotel business. When I met him he was running a boarding house on Pacific Avenue, Atlantic City, for the season. In the fall he acquired a hotel at Corydon, Ind., and removed there.

THE TWIN-SHAFT MINE SQUEEZE

One Sunday morning early just before the break of day,
Pealed forth an awful warning of ninety brave souls passed away,
Ah! little thought those happy ones who slumbered in their bed
That those who toiled so hard for them were numbered with the dead;
The news flashed out like lightning through those peaceful village homes,
Which rent the air with sorrow from sad mothers' weeping moans,
Down in a dusky coal mine five hundred feet or more,
Fell those true and honest men to rise again no more.

CHORUS

Then let's ne'er forget this sad fate they have met,
Let us pledge them our strongest of love—
Every man give a hand by the poor widows stand,
And pray God to protect from above.

Around the mining shaft there stood ten thousand souls or more,
Gazed at the Twin-Sister colliery which held the loved ones they adored,

Such sighing and such crying it would make your blood run cold,
To see those little children and gray-haired mothers old:
"Oh God! bring back our husbands," was their sad and mournful cry,
"Our homes they are so lonely," as the tears cours'd from their eyes,
The scene is one I'll ne'er forget if I should live for years,
Of those ninety miners brave who left their homes in tears.

Now many days have since gone by, not one single soul they found,
They're lying crushed and mangled in that cavern underground,
With the rocks there piled upon them to mark their resting place.
Oh! God have mercy upon their souls and bless them with thy grace.
For He who ruleth over all, His blessings we must ask;
And when our lives are ended, to Him we go at last.
When the trumpet it will sound to mark the Judgment Day,
We all will be united there upon that blessed day.

VI

ON STRIKE

ON STRIKE

SIMPLE justice compels us to recognize the fact that many concessions which the mine worker has gained from the industry have been wrested from the operators through the medium of the strike; and the strike has been most effective when the men put up a solid front.

The first miners' union,—possibly the first trade union in the United States, was organized in 1849 at a colliery in St. Clair, Schuylkill County, by an Englishman named John Bates; and it is known to history as Bates's Union. It hardly got its bearings before it went on strike for more wages. But within three weeks the strikers returned to their working places, beaten; the union died within a few months.

Not until 1868 did the anthracite miner find strength again to unite. The Workmen's Benevolent Association, later called the Miners' and Laborers' Benevolent Association, got its start this year in the same St. Clair which had given birth to Bates's Union. John Siney,[1] who later became a labor leader of national reputation, was its organizer. The W. B. A., as old miners refer to it, lived a brief seven

[1] Siney became head of the Miners' National Union. He died in poverty and was buried on top of a hill overlooking St. Clair.

years, and they were about the fattest that the mine workers saw in the whole century.

The W. B. A. grew stronger and bolder each succeeding month as it reached out to all parts of the anthracite region, and John Siney and his apostles talked of spreading the gospel among the great mass of miners in the bituminous fields. Meanwhile, there came from the operators insistent demands for reductions in wages which the union was able to resist in most instances until 1875—even in the face of the calamitous Jay Cooke failure of 1873, which brought market prices crashing earthward.

What had worked to the advantage of the W. B. A. up to 1875 was the difficulty of the operators to unite against them owing to fierce competition for markets. Most of the strikes until then had been sectional affairs: when miners suffered losses in a striking area, they drew courage and financial aid from their fellow unionists in sections where peace existed—a condition which also made one set of operators profit at the expense of another.

Parenthetically, this period marks the rise of that double-headed dragon kind of corporation which brought vast coal properties under control of a handful of railroad companies, which the U. S. Supreme Court has since caused to be segregated. The most powerful of these corporations, and incidentally the one most significant to us because several songs and ballads refer to it, was the Philadelphia & Reading Coal & Iron Company, incorporated in 1872. Under

the presidency of Franklin B. Gowen, the greatest industrial captain developed in the anthracite region, "the company" exerted a dominant influence over the destinies of thousands of its workers; while its power was felt all over the region.

In 1874, Gowen induced the operators to band themselves into the Anthracite Board of Trade ostensibly for the purpose of stabilizing the market by controlling production; tonnage quotas were appointed to each section. And in December came the ultimatum of the united operators—wages must come down! The amount of reductions was left to the operators of the different sections. It ranged from 10 to 20 per cent. The showdown had come at last!

THE LONG STRIKE

WHEN it began, the strike of 1875, frequently referred to as "the long strike," was region-wide, but before many weeks had passed the miners in the northern field had accepted a cut in wages and returned to work. Though disturbed over this defection, the strikers in the southern and middle fields carried on. This ballad was evidently written in February when the strike was in its second month and acute suffering had been causing some of their weaker brethren to blackleg. I presume that the unknown minstrel meant his composition to cheer his fellow workers against discouragement because of these defections. It was sung in the Panther Creek Valley where I obtained it.

As the months wore on, suffering became more sharp and at one time the leaders were willing to accept a reduction provided their union, the Miners and Laborers' Benevolent Association, would have a voice in the settlement. Though some independents were willing to agree to this, the great corporations, determined on ruining it, refused to have anything at all to do with the union. The strike dragged itself out to the middle of June, when the men, their families starving, submitted. They returned to work

humbled in pride, and broken-hearted. Gone was the union, and lacking its protection, they entered upon a condition of existence that was altogether tragic. And the union lay buried in its grave because the great operators, abetted by a coal and iron police recently established, and by a resort to the blacklist, willed it so.

THE LONG STRIKE

Obtained from William Forgay, Lansford.

Come all you jolly colliers, wherever you may be,
I pray you will attention give and listen unto me,
I have a doleful tale, and to relate it I will strive—
About the great suspension in eighteen seventy-five.

In eighteen hundred and seventy-five, our masters did conspire
To keep men, women, and children without either food or fire.
They tho't to starve us to submit with hunger and with cold,
But the miners did not fear them, but stood out brave and bold.

Now two long months are nearly o'er—that no one can deny,
And for to stand another month we are willing for to try,
Our wages shall not be reduced, tho' poverty do reign,
We'll have seventy-four basis, boys, before we'll work again.

And when we get the basis boys, we'll work again with joy,
We'll never mind those blacklegs named peddlers or decoys.
May the world all frown upon them, for such traitors they
have been!
And may each miner think of them whene'er we do begin.

So come all you jolly colliers, that appreciate good times,
And never mind them blacklegs I have mentioned in my
rhyme,
They are a disgrace unto their race, wherever they may be—
Traitors to their fellow miners, likewise society.

THE SLIDING SCALE

THE sliding scale was an arrangement originally entered into between the Workmen's Benevolent Association and the operators of the southern field in 1869 whereby wages were to be regulated in accordance with the rise and fall of average coal prices at Port Carbon, then at the head of the Schuylkill Canal; it had no time limit as have present-day agreements between the operators and miners. The basis for calculating the monthly percentages was to be $3 a ton, the miners to receive a five per cent. increase for every 25 cent advance in the market price above $3; when the price fell below the basis; they were to quit work until the market had adjusted itself.[1]

The miners of the southern field had welcomed the sliding scale as a means of eliminating long and frequent strikes. But the very next year, in April, the operators locked them out for four months because they refused to accept a cut in wages. The new agreement provided for a basis of $2.50 instead of $3 and the men were forced to work even if the price went down as low as $2; the percentage was 8⅓, added on or deducted from, the basis, as the

[1] See "Old W. B. A. Days," by Joseph F. Patterson, volume 2, page 355, December 30, 1908, Schuylkill County Historical Society minutes.

market determined. After the long strike of 1875, however, and for years after, the percentage was seldom added on the basis but deducted from it.

In 1878, a miner wrote—

The sliding scale which once some comfort sent us
Is now declared to be non compos mentis.
To curse it dreadfully we are incited,
Because, somehow, it works so darned one-sided.
It suffers from a bad disease, "decline";
And pines away right down to twenty-nine.[2]
It's nothing strange to find on seeing the docket,
We've worked a month and still are out of pocket.
It makes a man feel dirty cheap, you bet,
To work a month and then come out in debt.[3]

The sliding scale continued in force in the anthracite coal region until 1912 when the mine workers refused to have it incorporated in their agreement of that year, and it has not since been revived.

From the mention of "eight and a quarter" in the second and fourth lines in the chorus, I should place the date of the composition of this ballad as 1870, for the reference is to the percentage agreed upon in the settlement of that year. The man from whom I obtained this piece, John Mahar, an old Schuylkill County miner living in Philadelphia, told me he had heard it from its composer, John Morgan. Morgan, at the time he wrote it, lived in St. Clair. So pleased was he with his brain-child, that he sent a copy of it

[2] Percentage below the basis.

[3] This often happened as the miner was checked off for working materials, rent and groceries every month whether his contract yielded him pay or no.

in his finest script to Franklin B. Gowen, and the melancholy president of the Reading replied with a crisp, new $10 bill, and no comment.

THE SLIDING SCALE

Come on, you jolly minin' boys, that love to hear a song,
I will unfold a circumstance, to us it all belongs;
It's of those operators, as I do tell the tale,
And how nice they pull the wages down to meet the sliding scale.

CHORUS

Still thinkin' that the scale ud turn, the men did work along,
Expecting the coming month to have eight and a quarter on;
But when the twenty-fifth had come, it was the same old tale:
Those eight and a quarter off [4] me boys, upon the slidin' scale.

Now the operators themselves begin to slide,
And just take note of these words: they have a noble guide;
One half the coal mines round about I hear are for sale,
To pay the interest of their debts upon the sliding scale.

Success to Gowen, now I say, to carry out his plans,
To purchase all the Schuylkill mines and elsewhere if he can,
We hear the operators with a loud and mournful tale:
"All we've made is gone at last upon the sliding scale." [5]
If anybody asks you who did compose this song,
Tell 'em it was John Morgan composed it, right or wrong.

[4] The basis.
[5] The independents, who were forced to the wall and had to sell out to the Reading.

THE BLACKLEGS

THE blacklegs who deserted their fellows during the strike of 1875 became the Ishmaels of the region. Life was made so miserable for them that many fled to other parts; even their wives and children felt the sting of public scorn.

Patrick Johnson, then a blacksmith at the Eagle Hill colliery in the Schuylkill valley, wrote this ballad. John Mahar, who also recited this ballad for me, could not recall the year of its authorship but the ballad itself, I believe, bears evidence of having been composed during the 1875 strike.

Johnson enjoyed a popularity in the Schuylkill Valley that paralleled that of his brother, Jack, in the Hazleton section. He could sing well and enjoyed a local reputation as a fiddler. When he left mine work to become a strolling peddler of tea, he always carried his violin with him. Striking a mine patch, it was not the quality of his tea, nor the price he charged, but the sweet tunes which he drew from his violin that opened miners' hearts to him. If he remained after sundown, which frequently he did, he let himself be persuaded to sing his ballads or play his fiddle. Then on toward closing time, his grateful audience would scramble to determine who would

share his bed with him that night and break bread with him in the morning.

THE BLACKLEGS

Curiosity caused me one evening to ramble,
It's down by the Shoo Fly I chanced for to stray.
I espied two old ladies in great conversation—
In silence I waited to hear what they'd say.
Says one to the other: "Poor people's ruint
If the basis ain't settled in a day or two;
Bad luck to thim blacklegs, I wish they were vanished.
And good union men would get somethin' to do."

"Don't shpake so cruel," replied her companion,
"For the blackleg's proven that he is a wise man;
He's a hard-hearted father who'd see his child starvin'
And no one on earth to lend him a hand.
It's thim as has plenty can live ver' da'nty,
And thim as is poor for employment must push.
There's an old maxim since I was a baby—
'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'"

"Then if it be true," said one to the other,
"There's a great many men workin' well able to stand;
But no, they must keep their few dollars together
To take advantage of their fellow men.
It's dead was our heroes when our own states was in trouble?
They quickly rebelled when John Bull taxed the tea!
It was none o' your blacklegs signed the Declaration—
If it was, sure this country would ne'er be free."

"If ye examine that cent'ry, I'm sure you'll find plenty
Of blacklegs, as well as there is in our day.
Then there was leaders; they was no deceivers;
When men went into battle did not thim betray.
No doubt, me good lady, your leaders was honest;
Thim levies they made, they kept 'em I'm sure—
This is th' country for good edjicashun;
The lesson ye l'arn, for it ye pay dear."

"What if this union was forsaken forever,
And poor men made slaves as they've been before?
To make matters worse, they must work for small wages:
They ne'er can pay their bills that they owe in the store.
If they had been united and pulled all together,
And kept politics within their own bounds—
But when they[1] were elected, the poor was neglected;
They sold the men's freedom to Franklin B. Gowen."

"I see it's but folly, to talk to ye, Mollie,
But mind what I tell ye: on no one depend.
It's well I remember, one day last November,
When me pocket was empty I lost me best friend."
"When the men goes back to work, they must all be determined
To prepare for a struggle in some future day.
This is me road, I must bid ye good evenin'—
The childers alone, I must be away."

[1] The leaders?

THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR STRIKE

JOHN HORY, who wrote this ballad and two others which I use in this book, "My Handsome Miner Boy" and "Jack and Jake Are Miners," was born in Ireland and was brought to the coal region by his parents as a child. He typifies the tragic life of the anthracite coal mine worker. At 73 he is a mere ghost of a man. His back is stooped with years of bending to avoid striking his head against low-hanging "roofs" in gangways. His long, lean face bears those blue-black pencil dashes—pieces of coal that had been shot in under the skin and could not be washed out—which may be found on many miners. His skin is wan, and his eyes have a strange light in them. John Hory, judging from the thoughts which he gravely expressed to me, was about through with this world. He was more concerned with the joys that awaited him in the other world where his wife and a son who was killed in youth have preceded him. Visions of the future came to him constantly, he told me.

It was seven years since he had worked in a mine. His last job was a door boy's—opening and closing ventilation doors in a gangway for passing "trips." One day he was too slow for a team of mules. They

overtook him as he ran to open the door, and trampling over him, injured him permanently.

I visited him twice in July, one of the calls being on a Sunday afternoon. With some reluctance he let me see a copybook full of poems and ballads which he had been writing when the spirit or some stirring event moved him for half a century or more; but I found only three pieces that suited my purpose.

Hory was unique among the miner-bards of the period in that he showed no talent for singing, nor for dancing or for playing of a banjo or violin. He seems also to have lacked those social qualities which helped make some of the others the idols of their respective sections. His chief source of pleasure was his family circle, and next to that, indulgence in religious activity. Five minutes' conversation with him convinced me of his deep mysticism, which, I suppose, springs naturally from a serious, religious, nature, given much to meditation.

His sense of melody, like that of some of the other bards was crude, but he was able to give his ballads a sing-song quality that put them across and made them fit readily into an improvised tune. Ashland miners who worked with him in the Potts colliery in the '80s, recalled to me the occasions they heard him sing his compositions. Now in the '70s and '80s there was, at many small collieries, a feeling of comradeship between petty bosses and their men, which, by the way, has about completely passed from the industry in these days of highly disciplined organi-

zations. In those days a petty boss often joined his workers at lunch in some corner of the mine where singing and story-telling helped pass the dinner period away. The men squatted in a half circle—perhaps one or two sprawled on the floor—with the sputtering yellow little flames in their caps relieving the darkness. In this weird and unearthly setting were born more than one of Hory's ballads.

The Knights of Labor, the subject of one of them, was a national organization whose motto was: "An injury to one is the concern of all." It turned its eyes to the anthracite coal region as early as 1878. However, not much progress in forming assemblies was made until Terence V. Powderly, a Scranton machinist, became general master workman. Though the need for unity was great among the mine workers, the Knights of Labor was to fail in the realization of its ultimate goal for a number of reasons.

In the first place, its interests were too scattered The miner was but one of many kinds of skilled worker banded under one banner, with the result that the heterogeniety met with at a meeting of an assembly was sadly confusing. To preclude operators' spies from gaining information of its activities, a code of passwords and esoteric signs was evolved, which, smacking too much of the secret society, aroused the ire of the Church and many of its communicants; and too, coming at a time when the whole anthracite region was pitched to a high tension because of the Mollie Maguire terrorism with its dark ritualism,

the Knights of Labor found itself in an untenable situation.

And so when it went to fight in what was to be its supreme battle, in December, 1887, it entered the ring with a leaden tread, its hands tied behind its back and head a little confused. The strike began when employees on the Port Richmond branch of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad refused to work with men not members of their union and spread to all the railroads serving the anthracite coal region. Before the dawn of 1888, the mine workers of the middle and southern fields had also become involved; the northern men remained at work as they did during most of the long strike in 1875. Since the death of the W. B. A., the sliding scale had gone awry, and the mine workers had attempted through sporadic strikes to force various operators to agree upon $2.50 as a minimum basis; they also had demanded that they grant them the eight-hour day which the Pennsylvania State Legislature had passed, through the agitation of the W. B. A., back in 1868.

But the odds were too overwhelmingly against them. Lack of unity among the strikers was also a disheartening factor; and so, in February, the third month of the strike, Master Workman W. T. Lewis, Schuylkill district of the union, ordered the employees of the Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company back to work.[1] As the P. & R. men

[1] See "One Hundred Years of Anthracite," by Myron D. Edmonds. The Pottsville "Journal," 1925.

represented the largest single group of strikers, by their return they shot the bottom out of the strike, and the others perforce had to follow them, bitterly disillusioned. Two great unions now lay dead under the Napoleonic feet of Franklin B. Gowen!

THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR STRIKE

We're brave and gallant miner boys
  That work in underground,
For courage and good nature
  None like us can be found.
We work both late and early,
  And get but little pay
To support our wives and children,
  In free Americ-a.

Here's to the Knights of Labor,
  That brave and gallant band,
That Corbon and old Swigard
  Is trying to disband.
But stick and hang brave union men;
  We'll make them rue the day
They thought to break the K. of L.
  In free Americ-a.

If Satan took the blacklegs,
  I'm sure 'twould be no sin,
What peace and happiness 'twould be
  For us poor workingmen.

Eight hours we'd have for labor,
  Eight hours we'd have for play,
Eight hours we'd have for sleeping,
  In free Americ-a.

Corbon, Cox and Swigard,
  What will you have to say
When you meet our master
  Upon the Judgment Day?
With a frown He will confront you,
  And show you the other way,
Saying, you have starved my children,
  In free Americ-a.

They're trying to run the Keystone,[2]
  Assisted by Adam Knapp,
Bill Davis at the bottom,
  And Bill Raudy at the top.
But stick and hang, brave union men!
  We'll show them Yankee play,
And drive them off to blazes
  In free Americ-a.

When this strike is at an end,
  And we have gained the day,
We'll drink a health to our miner boys,
  Both near and far away;
And our brothers on the railroad
  In free Americ-a.

[2] A colliery near Ashland.

THE STRIKE OF 1902

THE strike of 1902 was the most important in the whole chaotic history of the anthracite coal industry and the longest, up to the most recent one. Its chief significance for us lies in the fact that it marked the dawn of a new era in the relation between coal miner and operator. Heretofore disunion had made of the miner a sort of mendicant—now begging, now demanding what he felt were his rights. But with the union strengthened as a result of this strike, he braced up and began to look the world in the face. Little by little he wrested concessions from unwilling operators until he came into a great part of his heritage as a free-born man.

The United Mine Workers of America, which prosecuted this decisive strike, had arisen in the bituminous fields, phoenix-like, out of the ashes of the Knights of Labor and other old unions. In 1894 there came into Schuylkill County from Ohio its first organizer in the anthracite region, a young man named John Fahey. He had dark hair, a bushy mustache, dreamy eyes like those of a poet which contrasted with his warm zeal and fiery eloquence. Hounded at every hand by coal and iron police, Fahey was yet able to organize the union's first local in the region only a few months after his arrival; it

was at Forrestville, a mountain mine patch near Pottsville and it became No. 863. He went all over the middle and southern fields now defying the police, now hiding from them, but all the time breaking ground for the coming of the miners' major prophet, John Mitchell. When later the anthracite fields were divided into three districts of the union, Fahey became the first president of District No. 9 and served in this office for ten years. Then, having completed his work, he went back to the friendly streets of his boyhood in Columbus, O. In the spring of 1925, he breathed Schuylkill County air once more, having come for a few days to help Forrestville local celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of its founding by him. I caught sight of him in Pottsville before he departed. Such a sad, forlorn-looking figure I had not seen in years. His face was pale, the dreamy eyes had sunk more into their sockets. His hair had turned gray and that bushy mustache of his had become the color of snow. Despite the enthusiasm with which he had been welcomed back, he was lonely. I felt sure of that. He died at home in Columbus in November, 1926.

John Mitchell, his friend and rival, a name the most revered in the anthracite coal region, came in 1899. He was then the national president of the union. Shortly after his arrival, he made known his determination to spread the gospel of organization among the groping miners and deliver them from their oppressive conditions. John L. Lewis, inter-

national president of the United Mine Workers of America, gives the following thumb-nail sketch of him: "Mitchell's sincerity illumined the charm of a personality heretofore unequaled in the American labor movement. His priestly appearance and rare poise endeared him to the entire population of the anthracite region. He was genteel without exaggeration, capable of strenuous endeavor and great perseverance, and although he traveled slowly, he progressed surely and steadily. . . . His generalship was invariably predicated upon the sound value of contemplation, aided by his will power and his confidence in his judgment. Possessed of a practical personality, developed by hard work into an originality, he was at all times himself—John Mitchell." [1]

The first strike engaged in by the new union was in 1900. It lasted two weeks and brought the men an increase of ten per cent. The agreement, a verbal one, was renewed for a year. When it expired on April 1, 1902, Mitchell sought a joint conference with the operators. The latter disdained meeting him. After repeated efforts to make them change their position, he issued a strike call on May 12, 1902. The mine workers sought an increase in wages, shortening of the work-day which then ran ten hours, and the recognition of their union; the operators, led by George F. Baer, president of the Reading Coal and Iron Company, an exponent of the theory that

[1] Quoted from an address delivered at the unveiling of a monument to John Mitchell in Scranton, May 30, 1924, as reported in the Scranton "Times."

industrialists ruled by the grace of God, feared to establish a precedent for joint conferences.

The three fields, numbering 147,000 mine workers, responded to the call of battle. But there was far from unanimity among the men. There were many among them who questioned Mitchell's wisdom in risking the future of the young union on such an encounter. But the fight went on, despite scabs from the cities, the cries of mothers and children for bread, and empty treasury chests. By October, the public had become aroused over the prospects of a coalless winter and its protesting voice echoed to the White House where sat President Theodore Roosevelt. T. R. forced the operators to accept arbitration. He appointed a commission to make a thorough study of conditions in the anthracite region and upon this investigation it based its award.

Mitchell was accorded the most honored niche in the region's pantheon and Roosevelt was given a rank near him. Mitchell remained national president of the union until 1908 when the American Federation of Labor made him one of its vice-presidents. In 1913 he assumed the chairmanship of the New York State Industrial Commission in which position he served until he died on September 9, 1919.

Some time after the 1902 strike, the anthracite miners offered their great leader a handsome sum of money but he modestly refused it and the debt of gratitude which they felt they owed him remained

unpaid until Memorial Day, 1924. On that day they unveiled a bronze, life-size statue of him to his memory, in Court House Square, Scranton, the first city of the region.

The 1902 strike gave to the Slavic mine worker—Russian, Pole Ukrainian, Slovak and Lithuanian—an opportunity to vindicate himself in the eyes of his English-speaking fellows. Since the late 1870s, when he first began to dribble into the region, his existence had been extremely difficult owing to the general belief that he had been imported by the operators to break down living standards and make possible low wages. But to men who had been brought up in an atmosphere of oppression, the gospel of Mitchell had an inspiring appeal, and they rallied almost to a man behind him. It was this cooperation which undermined the foundation of that invisible wall which had heretofore set apart Anglo-Saxon and Slav, and which by this day has practically disappeared.

Appreciating how well a ballad of the 1902 strike might fit my purpose, I made frequent inquiries for one. But it was not until a Sunday afternoon in July, 1925, that I heard of one having been sung at all. This lead brought no results, however.

But my quest went on. One day Peter Leinenbach, an obliging young business man of Big Mine Run, a former mine worker, drove me through the Mahanoy Valley in his automobile which enabled me to interview several singers of old-time ballads. It was on

this trip that I learned of the existence of another 1902 strike ballad but sung in the Slavic-English dialect. The stray stanzas themselves which I picked up here and there were clearly corrupted, indicating two origins. One of these was the Slavic-English ballad.

It was sheer luck, however, that brought me to the very source of it. On a Saturday evening in August, 1925, I called on Mrs. James Sheerin at her home, 63 Bowman Street, Wilkes-Barre, to obtain certain facts about her brother, Con Carbon, two of whose Irish dialect songs I had collected. And to my surprise and gratification her husband let me see a typewritten copy of what struck me as the very ballad I had been seeking, and its composer was Con Carbon. It had several minor defects in dialect which I have taken the liberty to correct for its presentation here. It was sung to the tune of either "Underneath Your Window" or another popular ballad of that day "Say You Love Me, Sue."

ME JOHNNY MITCHELL MAN

Now you know Mike Sokolosky—
Dat man my brudder.
Last night him come to my shanty,
Un me tellin': "What you cummin' fer"?
Him tellin' 'bout tomorra dark night,
Every miner all, big un shmall

Goin' fer on shtrike.
Un him say t' me: "Joe, me tellin' you
Don't be 'fraid or shcared fer nottin', never, never do."
"Don't be shcabby feller," him tellin' me again.
I'm say, "No sir! Mike, me out o' sight—
Me Johnny Mitchell man."

CHORUS

Me no 'fraid fer nottin',
Me dey never shcare.
Sure me shtrike tomorra night,
Dat's de business, I don't care.
Right a-here me tellin' you—
Me no shcabby feller,
Good union citizen—
Johnny Mitchell man.

Now me belong t' union, me good citizen.
For seven year, me livin' here
In dis beeg America.
Me workin' in de Prospect,[2]
Workin' Dorrance [2] shaft, Conyngham,[2] Nottingham [2]—
Every place like dat.
Workin' in de gangway, workin' in de breast,
Labor every day, me never get a rest.
Me got plenty money, nine hundred, maybe ten,
So shtrike kin come, like son of a gun—
Me Johnny Mitchell man.

These are the stanzas I obtained from a young

[2] Colleries in and around Wilkes-Barre.

man in Lost Creek who had a reputation in the Mahanoy Valley as a singer of old-time miner ballads before he was shell-shocked in France:

I'm no 'fraid fer nottinks, John,
  Fer me dey never shcare,
Call em shtrike to-morra, John,
  I no never care.

Right a-here I tellin' you,
  I'm no shcabby feller,
I'm de good union citizen—
  Dat Johnny Mitchell man.

Me un me buddy work in de mines,
Me un me buddy have damn goo' times,
Every two weeks we get em pay,
Un hully gee! no work next day.

On the Sunday following the trip through the Mahanoy Valley, I met Dr. William Leach, a young physician practising in Shenandoah, who recited the following stanzas for me:

I'm no 'fraid fer nottin',
  I'm a Johnny Mitchell man;
I workin' in de gangway,
  I workin' in de slant.

Everytime come pay-day,
  Seventy dollar I ketch,

My brudder John Shemansky,
He workin' in the slant.

CHORUS

We workin' in de gangway,
We workin' in de breast,
Ketchin' pay on pay-day,
Us never gettin' rest.
JESUS CHRIST A'MIGHTY.

The latter chorus was also furnished to me by a singer in Ashland. I am told that it is still sung in some saloons in the Mahanoy Valley and that the Slavic miners join usually on the refrain which is apochryphal, and which they render with all the power of their lungs.

Of the three stanzas given me by the Lost Creek singer, the third differs in measure from the two to such a degree that it probably is derived from still another ballad, which I have not found.

PAT MULLALY

PAT MULLALY was a miner at a colliery in South Carbondale, now the Powderly of the Hudson Coal Company. He earned widespread contempt through the Lackawanna Valley for working during a Knights of Labor strike there. The ballad about him evidently spread outside the valley for the man who gave me the following stanza and chorus told me that he had heard it as a young man in Avoca, Luzerne County, thirty-seven years before. He is a locomotive engineer on the Delaware & Hudson Railroad and lives not far from the Powderly colliery.

There's Pat Mullaly who never kept tally,
He would work a mule's work to get two men's pay,
Let us all get together and write him a letter,
The quicker the better to get him out of the way.

CHORUS

We'll combine, the union join,
And work eight hours a day,
And keep the market clear of coal,
And then they'll raise our pay.

VII

THE MOLLIE MAGUIRES

THE MOLLIE MAGUIRES

THE Mollie Maguires sprang up in the anthracite coal region some years before the Civil War. They continued their reign of terror with ever increasing boldness until about 1876 when the shadow of the gallows or of prison finally fell across their conscience and crushed them.

They were exclusively Irish Catholic miners who had gained control of the anthracite divisions of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and used them as a cloak for criminal activities. The Church was openly against them while a great mass of Irish miners also opposed them. At first known as "Buckshots," they soon adopted the name used by a band of young peasants in Ireland who terrorized landlords' agents during the 1840s. During their earlier years, they usually sent "coffin notices" before committing acts of violence. But the delay caused by such warnings presently became galling to men impatient for revenge. Colliery buildings were set to the torch. Attempts were made to blow up bridges and to dynamite railroad trains; while men were murdered often in broad daylight, the criminals fleeing to the mountains which lay conveniently at hand. The taking of a man's life became as trivial an act as a beat-

ing had been earlier. They found themselves riding the crest of a mighty wave of blood and the question began to be asked, could they stop of their own volition?

The original motive that drove them on was rooted deep in the economic soil of the times. To carry the metaphor a step further, they were a noxious weed which grew out of a condition where mine workers lived in serf-like poverty; worked under conditions that were inhumane; and suffered oppression. Thus coal operators and their foremen suffered most of the terror.

A system of bartering Mollies of one division with those of another when a murder was to be committed made detection by the police almost impossible. Only bodymasters and a choice few surrounding them plotted outrages, and only men picked to execute them were aware of immediate plans. It became plain, then, that if the lawless band was to be destroyed, the inner circle would have to be penetrated. With this thought in mind, Franklin B. Gowen, president of the Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company, hired Allan Pinkerton, head of the National Detective Agency in 1873.

They agreed that a detective should be sent into the anthracite coal fields who would be able to work himself into the very heart of the band, and with the information he gathered become the instrument by which the Mollie Maguires might be crushed. To this delicate job, Pinkerton assigned a young Irish

immigrant, James McParlan of name, who had been in his employ only a year. Assuming the name of McKenna, he simulated the character of a bold, roistering fellow out on a grand lark, a fugitive from justice, and a counterfeiter of "queer" money. As the occasion demanded, he was able to sing an Irish ballad, turn a graceful jig or reel; match the hardest drinker glass for glass; exchange fists with any challenger who dared face him, or make love to the fair sex. All this smoothed the road which led directly into those dark and esoteric chambers where evidence piled up daily by which he was to send Mollie Maguires to the gallows, to prison, or into voluntary exile. It was with a ballad of the Mollie Maguires of Ireland, which probably he had carried over from the old country, that he made his debut among Mollies in the barroom of Pat Dormer's Sheridan House, Pottsville, one night in November, 1873. It is as follows:[1]

Pat Dolan, it's my Christian name,
Yes, an' my surname too, sir;
An' oft you've listened to me sthrane,
I'll tell you somethin' new, sir!
In Cavan-town, where we sat down,
Our Irish hearts to inspire,
There's bould recruits an' undaunted youths,
An' they'r led by Mollie Maguire!

[1] Quoted from "The Molly Maguires and the Detectives." By Allan Pinkerton, page 77.

Chorus

With my riggadum du, an' to hell wid the crew
Wouldn't help to free our nation;
When I look back, I count 'em slack,
Wouldn't join our combination!

Said Mollie to her darlin' sons,
"What tyrant shall we tumble?
That filthy tribe we can't abide,
They rob both meek and humble;
There is one Bell, a child of hell,
An' a magistrate in station,
Let lots be drew an' see which av you
Will tumble him to damnation"!

The lot's now cast, the sentence passed,
I scorn to tell a lie, sir!
I got my chance, it wur no blank;
I wur glad to win the prize, sir!
To swate Bill Cooney's I did repair,
To meet the parson, Bell, sir!
At his brain I took me aim,
Sayin' "Come down, ye fin' o' hell, sir"!

Those Orangemen, they gathered then,
An' swore they'd kill us all, sir!
For their frien' Bell, who lately fell,
An' got a terrible fall, sir!
But Mollie's sons, wid swords an' guns,
Wid pikes—pitchforks—glancin',
Those bold recruits an' undaunted youths,
Stepped into the field just prancin'.

Those Orangemen, they all stood then,
To fight they thought it a folly;
They'd rather run an' save their lives,
An' leave the field to Mollie!
Altho' I'm in a foreign land,
For the cause I'll ne'er retire,
May heaven smile on every chil'
That belongs to Mollie Maguire!

One night as I lay upon me bed,
I heard a terrible rattle;
Who wur it but Bell, come back from hell,
To fight another battle!
Then at his brain I took me aim—
He vanished off in fire—
An' as he went the air he rent
Sayin', "I'm conquered by Mollie Maguire"!

Now I'm in America,
An' that's a free nation!
I generally sit an' take my sip
Far from a police station!
Four dollars a day—it's not bad pay—
An' the boss he likes me well, sir!
But little he knows that I'm the man
That shot that fin' o' hell, sir!

CHORUS

Wid me riggadum du, an' to hell wid the crew,
Wouldn't fight to free our nation,
When I look back I count 'em slack—
Wouldn't join our combination!

Another Irish ballad sung by McParlan which is of particular interest to us because it deals with mines, was called, "The Miner and the Exciseman." [2] It follows:

"I know that young folks like to hear a song;
It's something funny—it's not very long;
It's of an exciseman, the story I'll tell,
Who thought t'other night he was going to hell.

CHORUS

With my fal-al-addy, dol, tol-ol-oddy-dol, etc.

This exciseman went out upon the other day,
He met plenty of smugglers, as I hear them say,
All gauging their liquor, just ready to sell,
This exciseman got drunk, boys, the truth for to tell.

Well, 'twas nigh to a coal mine this exciseman did lie,
When four or five miners there chanced to pass by;
They took him on their shoulders and bore him away,
Like a peddler's pack, without any delay.

It's into the bucket they lowered him right down,
When this jolly exciseman he got underground,
An' when he awoke in great horror and fear,
Up starts a big miner, saying, "What brought you here"?

[2] Quoted from "The Molly Maguires and the Detectives." By Allan Pinkerton, page 248.

"Indade, Mr. Devil, I don't very well know,
But I see that I have come to the regions below;
An' if ye spare me now, as you've oft done before,
I'll never kape robbin' the poor any more"!

"It's what trade did you follow when you were above"?
"I was an exciseman, an' few did me love."
"If you're an exciseman, why, here you'll remain,
An' you'll never get out of this dark cell again."

"Or you must give us money—now that we demand,
Before you get to one sight of the land"!
"Here is a hundred guineas," the exciseman did say,
"For I long to get seeing the light of day"!

MUFF LAWLER, THE SQUEALER

MIKE "MUFF" LAWLER, a notorious leader of the Mollie Maguires, was tried in the Schuylkill County courts in 1876 as accessory after the fact to the murder of Thomas Sanger, a mine foreman, and William Uren, a miner, at Raven Run, on September 1, 1875. The first jury disagreed but another found him guilty. However, he saved his neck by turning State's evidence in other Mollie Maguire murder cases.

This action which was interpreted as showing the white feather, brought him contempt and derision. Not only Mollies but even Irishmen who hated the notorious crew became incensed against him. For in their eyes no man sank lower in degradation than the informer, or "squealer." He was considered a traitor to his God and to the race and family which bore him; and Muff Lawler's prominence served to intensify the bitterness against him.

Muff was a strong, thick-set miner, slightly above medium in height; a bald spot on the crown of his head and mutton chop whiskers gave him a somewhat Pickwickian touch. He was known far and wide as a breeder of "mufflers," a fine strain of game-

cocks which found their way into most of the cockpits of the region, and it was from them that he got his peculiar nickname. A prototype of the modern j'iner, a perennial back-slapping good fellow, his social talents helped to carry him far in the councils of the Mollies. But long before he turned informer he had demonstrated to his fellows that he lacked the reckless courage which they demanded.

It was he who welcomed James McParlan, Pinkerton's man, as a brother of the true faith when the detective first entered the hard coal fields; who threw open his home in Shenandoah and shared his bed and bread with him for weeks; who spoke the good word in his behalf with other leaders; and who, as Bodymaster of the Shenandoah division, swore him into the A. O. H. which gave the detective an entree into the inner circle he wanted so much to penetrate,—all these blunders Muff Lawler committed unwittingly to his own and his fellows' ruin.

"Muff Lawler, the Squealer" was the only ballad dealing with the Mollie Maguires of the anthracite coal region that I was able to unearth and I have not heard of the existence of any others. It was recited to me by a former miner living outside the anthracite coal region who admitted (in the presence of a third party) that he was secretary of an A. O. H. division in these fields during the reign of the Mollie Maguires.

MUFF LAWLER, THE SQUEALER

When Muff Lawler was in jail right bad did he feel,
He thought divil the rooster would he ever heal,
"Be jabers," says Lawler, "I think I will squeal."
"Yes, do," says the Judge [1] to Muff Lawler.

It was down in the office those lawyers did meet,
"Come in, Mr. Lawler"; they gave him a seat.
"Give us your whole history and don't us deceive."
"Be jabers, I will," says Muff Lawler.

"There are some o' thim near," he says, "and more o' thim far;
There are some o' thim you'll never catch I do fear."
"If they are on this earth," he says, "we'll have them I'm sure."
"Yes, but be jabers they're dead," says Muff Lawler.

"It's the live ones we want, not the dead ones at all."
"If you want the whole history, you'll have to take dead ones and all."
"Come out with your history or quickly we'll plant
You back in your cell, Mr. Lawler."

"Now I'll commence," he says, "me whole story to tell,
When I go back to Shenandoah, I'll be shot sure as hell."
"We'll send you to a country where you're not known so well."
"Be jabers, that's good," says Muff Lawler.

[1] Probably Cyrus L. Pershing, President Judge of the Schuylkill County Courts during the Mollie Maguire trials.

THE END